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FOOTBALL

2009 COLLEGE PREVIEW

THE THREE AMIGOS RETURN Page 24

KID SMIRK LEADS COACHING CAROUSEL

LINDY'S ALL-DECADE TEAM

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"About the only thing I'd rather do than play basketball is hunt. There's just nothing like enjoying the great outdoors with my friends and family. Plus the challenge posed by the superior senses of your game. I grew up hunting in Louisiana, and I think it's a tradition we should pass on." **I'm The NRA.**

Karl "the Mailman" Malone
Legendary power forward for the Utah Jazz and Los Angeles Lakers, NBA's 2nd all-time scorer and Most Valuable Player '98-99, fisherman, hunter, cattle rancher.

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Wayne LaPierre, NRA Executive Vice President

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Letter from the Publisher

Has there ever been a year of more anticipation for the start of college football than the start of the 2009 season? The start of the college season is always greatly anticipated — some start the countdown clock as soon as spring training ends.

But this year is different. Never before have the top three Heisman finishers eschewed NFL riches to finish out their collegiate careers. In addition, they all play the critical quarterback position — and they all lead one of the best teams in the country.

Dennis Dodd takes an in-depth look at the three superstar QBs beginning on page 24. Which one (if any) will lead their team to the national title? Will two of the three face each other in the Rose Bowl for the national championship?

Lindy's editors give you their best insights beginning on page 34.

How many days until the season kicks off? I can't wait!

Sincerely,

Lindy Davis Jr.

Lindy Davis

P. S. As always, your comments and suggestions are appreciated.

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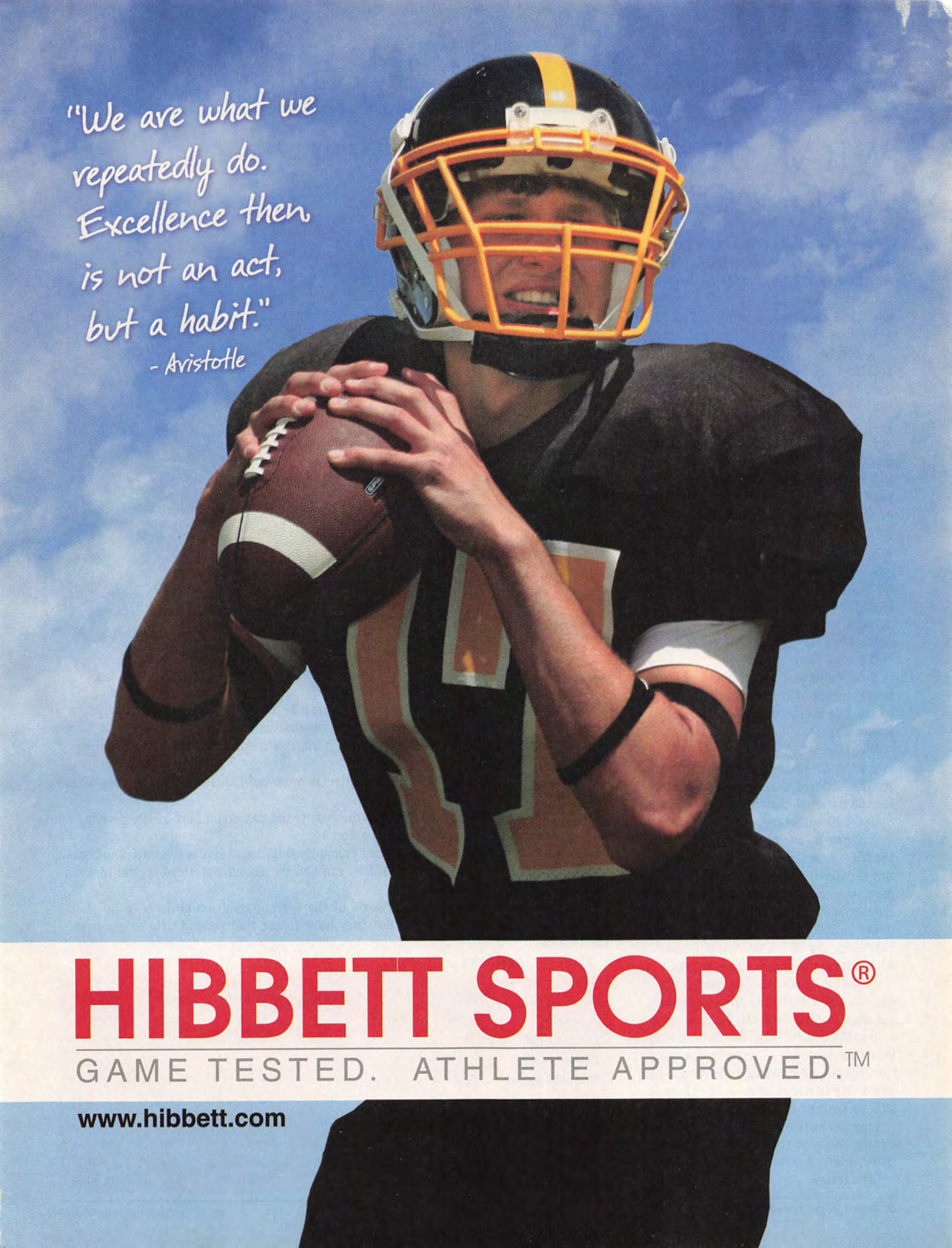
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- Aristotle
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WRAP UP THIS DECADE WITH A BOW ON IT

BY ANTHONY GIMINO

When the decade began, Pete Carroll was an NFL coaching washout, Urban Meyer was an assistant coach at Notre Dame, Michael Vick had the world on a string, and Joe Paterno was a young lad of 73.

We barely knew what the read option was, had heard little of a Division I-AA coach named Jim Tressel (back when we used to call it I-AA), and the BCS had worked well enough in its first two go-rounds.

Back then, it would have been hard to imagine that a head coach would be earning $4 million a year, or that back-to-back sophomores would win the Heisman, or that Alabama, Michigan, Penn State AND Notre Dame would ramble aimlessly into three-win seasons.

Shoot, it got so bad that Alabama and Notre Dame hired head coaches and then fired them before they got the chance to coach a football game.

It's been strange.

It's been fun.

Now, as we stand at the end of a superlative decade of college football, we'd like to ask one teeny, tiny thing from our favorite sport:

USC-Florida.

It's the national championship we want. It's the national championship we need. It's the national championship we deserve.

USC-LSU would do, too, in a pinch.

Just give us one of the big, bad boys of the SEC — each with two national titles this decade — against the decade's finest program ... never mind that coach Paul Hackett mucked things up at USC with a 5-7 record in 2000 before Pistol Pete arrived.

USC vs. the SEC. That would be one whopper of a topper for the decade.

As we look back on this nearly full decade, there is still much unfinished business to cram into the final chapter.

Yes, USC might look like the nation's best this decade — a word to the critics: the Trojans' AP national title counts just like a BCS national title — but there is still 10 percent of the decade remaining.

Program of the Decade. Coach of the Decade. Team of the Decade. They're all still hanging in the balance.

Let's review:

Illustration by Tim Williams

PROGRAM OF THE DECADE

Only national champs need apply, and Miami's 19-19 record in the past three years is a disqualifier. That leaves six programs in the discussion ... and since we don't want to be complete BCS snobs, let's give special honorable mention to Boise State and its 98 victories this decade.

Right now: It's USC, followed in no particular order by LSU, Florida, Oklahoma, Ohio State, and Texas.

What 2009 means: With a national title, four teams can claim best-of-the-decade honors. Each starts in *Lindy's* preseason Top 10.

USC, Florida and LSU can win a third championship, trumping everybody. Oklahoma, which has the most victories this decade, can win its second Waterford crystal football in its fifth title-game appearance.

If the Sooners can win the final game of the season, they would move to No. 1, with the decade's most victories. But they have to get that second title to get past the others.

Here's the breakdown:

	Florida	LSU	Ohio State	Oklahoma	Texas	USC
Record	87-29	90-27	91-23	102-19	97-18	93-22
League titles	3	3	5	6	1	7
Division titles	3	4	—	7	3	—
National titles	2	2	1	1	1	2
BCS games	4	4	6	7	3	7
Bowl record	4-5	7-2	4-5	4-5	7-2	6-2
First-rounders	8	9	15	7	13	14
Heismans	Tebow	none	Smith	White Bradford	none	Palmer, Leinart, Bush

Photo by Richard Mackson/Sports Illustrated/Getty Images

TEAM OF THE DECADE

Right now: 2001 Miami

The Hurricanes had the nation's best collection of pro talent — maybe ever. The backfield included running backs Clinton Portis, Frank Gore, Willie McGahee and Najeh Davenport. Quarterback Ken Dorsey threw passes to tight end Jeremy Shockey and receiver Andre Johnson. Left tackle Bryant McKinnie won the Outland Trophy.

The defense — led by safety Ed Reed, cornerback Phillip Buchanon and linebacker Jonathan Vilma — was the stingiest in the nation. The Canes outscored their opponents 512-117. They produced five first-round picks in the 2002 NFL Draft, and 10 more in the following two drafts.

They toyed with Nebraska in the Rose Bowl, winning 37-14.

What 2009 means: Florida has the pieces — Tim Tebow and a stout defense that returns intact — to run through the SEC in dominating fashion. The Gators have the star power to eclipse 2001 Miami.

Here are the other top teams of the decade:

2. 2004 USC (13-0) — These Trojans had the best offense-defense balance of the Pete Carroll era, and flattened Oklahoma in the Orange Bowl title game, 55-19.

3. 2005 Texas (13-0) — Crazy-legged Vince Young and the 'Horns led the nation with 50.15 points per game, winning a classic Rose Bowl over USC.

4. 2000 Oklahoma (13-0) — The Sooners caught the nation by surprise and had a glorious three-game stretch in which they routed Texas 63-14, beat No. 2 Kansas State and defeated No. 1 Nebraska. They nearly shut out Florida State in national title Orange Bowl, 13-2.

5. 2005 USC (12-1) — It's a bit strange to not have an SEC team among the top five, but we'll take the Leinart-Bush-White Trojans over any of them.

BCS MATCHUPS

This is the last year of the BCS games (minus the Rose Bowl) on Fox, which was an odd college football partner. College football games on Fox just don't sound like college football.

Starting with the 2010 season, ESPN will have the rights to the BCS bowls for four years. So, that's what $500 million can buy you these days. (The Rose Bowl will stay on ABC, however.)

The Rose Bowl folks are the hosts of the national title game this season, and we can only hope the show is as good as the last time the championship was decided in Pasadena.

Here is how *Lindy's* sees it:

BCS NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Thursday, Jan. 7
Pasadena, Calif. • Rose Bowl
BCS #1 vs. BCS #2
***Lindy's* pick:** Florida vs. Texas

ROSE BOWL

Friday, Jan. 1
Pasadena, Calif. • Rose Bowl
Pac-10 champ vs. Big Ten champ
***Lindy's* pick:** USC vs. Ohio State

ORANGE BOWL

Tuesday, Jan. 5
Miami • Dolphin Stadium
ACC champ vs. BCS at-large
***Lindy's* pick:** Virginia Tech vs. West Virginia

SUGAR BOWL

Friday, Jan. 1
New Orleans • Superdome
SEC champ vs. BCS at-large
***Lindy's* pick:** LSU* vs. Penn State*

FIESTA BOWL

Monday, Jan. 4
Glendale, Ariz. • University of Phoenix Stadium
Big 12 champ vs. BCS at-large
***Lindy's* pick:** Oklahoma* vs. Boise State*

**at-large*

Photo by Harry How/Getty Images

PETE CARROLL

COACH OF THE DECADE

Right now: Pete Carroll

He's a rock star. The dude is the king of L.A. as a college coach. He's the envy of Rick Neuheisel.

He recruits 'em and then coaches 'em up as well as anybody; the record seven consecutive Pac-10 titles, the blowouts in the bowl games, and the two national championships are the proof.

But here's our favorite stat about Carroll. He has lost only 15 times in eight seasons. But that's not the stat. The stat is this: He has lost only one game — ONE — by more than a touchdown. For you trivia buffs, that was a 27-16 setback at Notre Dame in his first season.

What 2009 means: Urban Meyer won 17 games in two seasons at Bowling Green, won 22 games (including an undefeated season) in two years at Utah, and has won two national titles at Florida.

Let's see ... if Meyer wins another national championship, the decade honor is his. Bob Stoops can't be counted out, but losing five consecutive BCS bowls is a big downer.

Here are *Lindy's* top dozen coaches of the decade:

1. Pete Carroll, USC	7. Nick Saban, LSU/Alabama
2. Urban Meyer, Bowling Green/Utah/Florida	8. Les Miles, Oklahoma State/LSU
3. Bob Stoops, Oklahoma	9. Paul Johnson, Navy/Georgia Tech
4. Jim Tressel, Ohio State	10. Mark Richt, Georgia
5. Mack Brown, Texas	11. Mike Riley, Oregon State
6. Frank Beamer, Virginia Tech	12. Gary Patterson, TCU

GAME OF THE DECADE

Right now: Texas 41, USC 38, 2005 season, Rose Bowl.

Reggie Bush's boneheaded lateral. More than 1,100 yards of offense. Pete Carroll going for it on 4th-and-2 from USC's 45 with 2:09 left. Texas stuffing LenDale White.

It was all eclipsed by Vince Young's performance of the decade — 267 passing yards and 200 rushing yards, including the 8-yard fourth-down scramble for the game-winning score with 19 seconds to go.

The rest of the top 5:

2. Boise State 43, Oklahoma 42, 2006 season, Fiesta Bowl

What do you remember most? Boise State tying the game with seven seconds left on a 50-yard hook-and-lateral on 4th-and-18? The Broncos winning in overtime on a behind-the-back handoff on a two-point conversion? Ian Johnson's televised proposal to his cheerleader girlfriend after the game?

3. USC 34, Notre Dame 31, 2005

It was bleak for the Trojans, facing 4th-and-9 from their 26 late in the game. With not a half-inch to spare, Matt Leinart snuck a pass to Dwayne Jarrett, who took it 61 yards. Eventually, it set up Leinart calling his own number from inside the 1. Initially stopped, he got over the goal-line with the help of a push from Reggie Bush, breaking the hearts of the green-clad Irish.

It was the most watched regular-season college football game in nine years.

4. Ohio State 31, Miami 24, 2002 season, Fiesta Bowl

Ask Miami fans how they feel about Terry Porter. He's the field judge who called pass interference in the end zone against Glenn Sharpe in overtime. The Buckeyes went on to tie the game and win in double overtime, ending the Canes' 34-game winning streak.

5. Ohio State 42, Michigan 39, 2006

Hard to imagine a regular-season game with so many angles. No. 1 Ohio State vs. No. 2 Michigan. National championship game appearance on the line. Bo died a day earlier. The game was pretty good, too. The Wolverines played catch-up most of the afternoon, but fell short when Ohio State's Ted Ginn Jr. recovered an onside-kick with about two minutes left.

ALL-DECADE TEAM

Which current players could still play their way onto the All-Decade team? The most likely thing to happen is that Oklahoma's Sam Bradford could make second-team quarterback Matt Leinart disappear (kind of like the Arizona Cardinals' Kurt Warner did last season).

Anyway, another possibility could be Florida linebacker Brandon Spikes, although the competition at all-decade linebacker is ridiculous — to the point, the outstanding Penn Stater Paul Posluszny didn't even make the cut.

More possibilities are USC's Taylor Mays and Tennessee's Eric Berry at safety, or Alabama's Javier Arenas at all-purpose. Again, serious competition.

In fact, we're gearing up for the hate mail from Texas fans for not having any of the great Longhorns' defensive backs on the list — Quentin Jammer, Michael Huff, Nathan Vasher, Aaron Ross. Sorry, we'll stick with the DBs we have.

Meanwhile, we're pretty sure Oklahoma fans will love this list.

Before we get to our All-Decade team, a couple of explanations:

1. No consideration was given to a player's draft status or his pro career.

2. We looked at players' entire careers, which carried more weight than a guy who had one great season. As a result, it hurt guys who ended their college playing days in 2000 and, thus, played only one season in the decade. An exception was made for LaDainian Tomlinson. Sounds reasonable, right?

FIRST-TEAM

OFFENSE

QB	Tim Tebow, Florida
RB	Adrian Peterson, Oklahoma
RB	Darren McFadden, Arkansas
WR	Larry Fitzgerald, Pitt
WR	Michael Crabtree, Texas Tech
TE	Kellen Winslow Jr., Miami
C	Greg Eslinger, Minnesota
OL	Robert Gallery, Iowa
OL	Jammal Brown, Oklahoma
OL	Bryant McKinnie, Miami
OL	Shawn Andrews, Arkansas
AP	Reggie Bush, USC
PK	Nate Kaeding, Iowa

DEFENSE

DE	Julius Peppers, North Carolina
DT	Glenn Dorsey, LSU
DT	Tommie Harris, Oklahoma
DE	David Pollack, Georgia
LB	Rocky Calmus, Oklahoma
LB	A.J. Hawk, Ohio State
LB	James Laurinaitis, Ohio State
DB	Derrick Strait, Oklahoma
DB	Terence Newman, Kansas State
DB	Roy Williams, Oklahoma
DB	Sean Taylor, Miami
P	Daniel Sepulveda, Baylor

SECOND-TEAM

OFFENSE

QB	Matt Leinart, USC
RB	Larry Johnson, Penn State
RB	LaDainian Tomlinson, TCU
WR	Calvin Johnson, Georgia Tech
WR	Charles Rogers, Michigan State
TE	Heath Miller, Virginia
C	Alex Mack, California
OL	Joe Thomas, Wisconsin
OL	Jake Long, Michigan
OL	Andre Smith, Alabama
OL	Jon Stinchcomb, Georgia
AP	Ted Ginn Jr., Ohio State
K	Mason Crosby, Colorado

DEFENSE

DE	Chris Long, Virginia
DT	Shaun Cody, USC
DT	John Henderson, Tennessee
DE	Terrell Suggs, Arizona State
LB	Derrick Johnson, Texas
LB	Teddy Lehman, Oklahoma
LB	E.J. Henderson, Maryland
DB	DeAngelo Hall, Virginia Tech
DB	Mike Doss, Ohio State
DB	Ed Reed, Miami
DB	Troy Polamalu, USC
P	Ryan Plackemeier, Wake Forest

SIGN 'EM EARLY

Getting early commitments from high school players — and early can mean a year in advance — is a trend that started in the 1990s and shows no indication of slowing down. The big schools make the most of it; they have the clout.

By the end of April, Texas already had more than 20 commitments.

The problem then becomes babysitting those recruits for several months, making sure they stay committed, and fending off poachers. Sounds like a waste of time and resources as the schools try to reach the finish line — Signing Day on the first Wednesday in February.

An early signing period, such as there is basketball and other sports, makes increasing sense.

What does the American Football Coaches Association say about it?

"There have been several straw polls, and I think the results are mixed," San Jose State coach Dick Tomey, the president of the AFCA, told *Lindy's*.

"Some think their situations would be hurt by an early signing date because they're not way up the recruiting food chain. I personally feel like it would be a good thing. Even though we're not high on the football food chain, I would like to get the guys who aren't coming out of the way so we can concentrate on the guys we have a chance on."

Coaches have suggested various summer and fall signing periods, but more support is being thrown behind a December window, which is when certain junior college recruits can sign.

"There is probably more support than ever," Tomey said. But he added: "I'd say it's a ways away."

THREE-FOR-FOUR

Florida is trying to win its third national championship in a four-year span, something that has been done only four times in the past 100 years:

Nebraska	1994-95, '97	Tom Osborne
Notre Dame	1946-48	Frank Leahy
Minnesota	1934-36	Bernie Bierman
Harvard	1910, 12-13	Percy Houghton

THAT DARNED BCS

The BCS system is impossible to like. It ranks right up there with bank CEOs. Never mind that the BCS is better than the system it replaced. It's simply hampered by the math, because three worthy teams (or more) just don't go into two spots in the national title game, no matter how you pick them. Whatcha gonna do?

We love to talk/debate/rant about it, but it's almost not worth worrying about. The BCS deal is in place for five more seasons. It is what it is ... and what it isn't. Deal with it.

But we can dream, can't we? In our perfect little sunny world, we envision an eight-team playoff.

That would include the champions of the ACC, Big East, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-10 and SEC. The final two teams would be the highest-rated teams from other conferences, plus independents. You could impose a caveat on that if you'd like — such as those non-BCS conference teams that would have to finish in the top 16 of the final rankings.

Otherwise, no non-league champs allowed.

This does a couple of things.

— It levels the conference playing field. It would no longer matter if you decide your league winner by championship game or full round-robin or something else (Big Ten). It only matters that you spend a couple of months battling it out. Win your conference or else.

— It increases the importance of the regular season, already college football's strongest selling point.

As it is now, one loss is a potential BCS back-breaker, so there is little incentive for teams to play a great non-conference schedule. (Well, other than a truckload of cash.)

Under our playoff scenario, where conference titles mean everything, there is no downside to playing a great non-league schedule. Teams can actually use those as tune-ups for their conference schedule (and make serious TV money and recruiting hay), while we get more great football to watch — during and after the regular season.

Amen.

HEISMAN WATCH

SAM BRADFORD

Photo by Bruce L. Schwartzman

You know by now that this is historic. Two returning Heisman winners — Florida's Tim Tebow and Oklahoma's Sam Bradford, who won as sophomores. Texas' Colt McCoy is in hot pursuit.

Anybody else will be lucky to get a sniff of the statue this season, especially if that player doesn't line up at quarterback.

There isn't much major star wattage at running back and receiver, not that it would matter much.

As a sign of the times in college football, the Heisman has turned into a quarterback award. The guys taking the snap have won eight of the nine awards this decade, with only USC's multi-threat Reggie Bush able to crash the party.

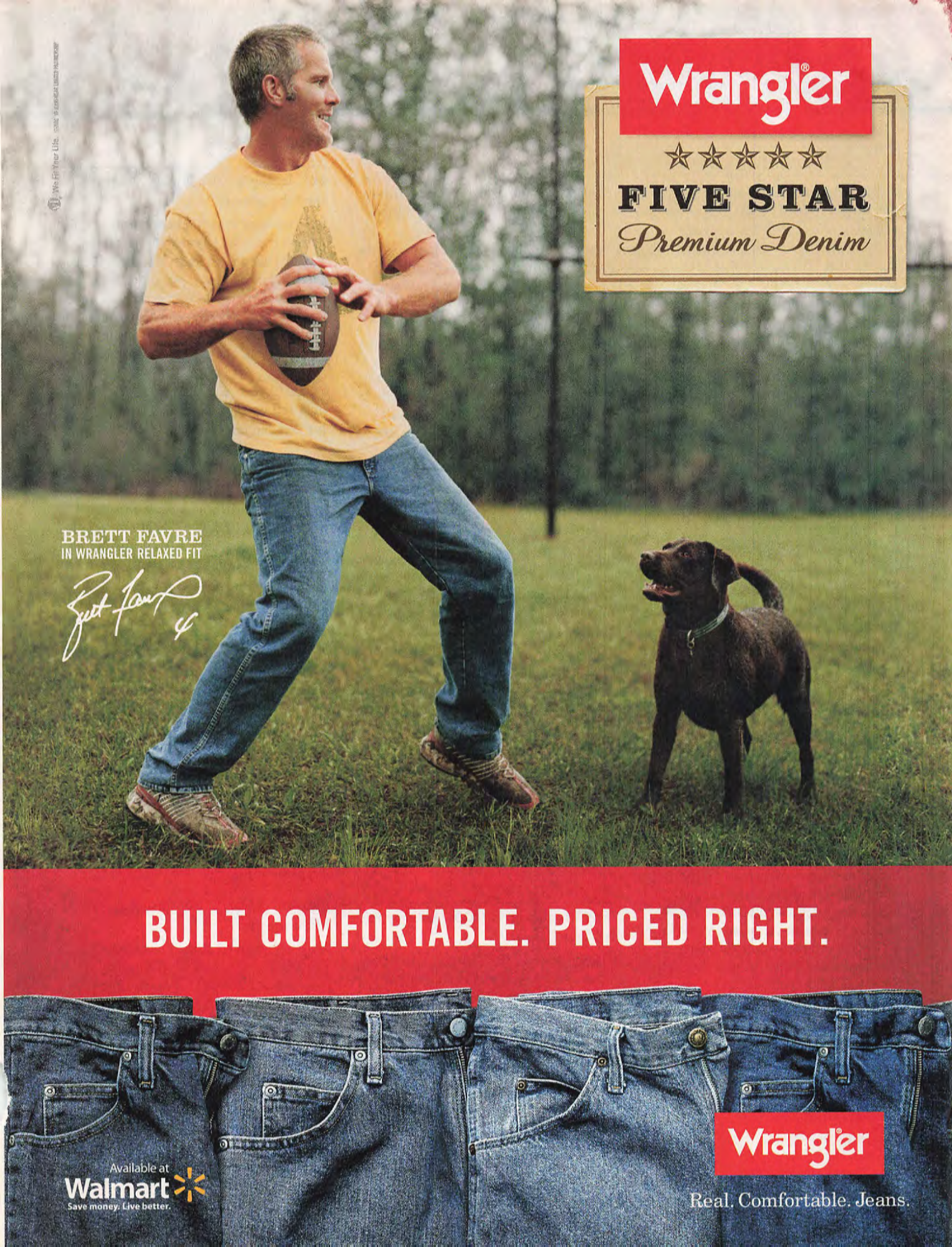
Consider that running backs won every trophy from 1972 to 1983 — with Nebraska's Johnny Rodgers and Mike Rozier serving as bookends for that era.

Can anybody else, quarterback or otherwise, end up in New York City for the Heisman presentation?

Let's take a look at the field, remembering that these aren't what we consider the 10 best players, but rather the players who have a best chance of having a great year on a great team from a major conference.

This fully explains the presence of an untested USC quarterback on the list.

1.	Tim Tebow	QB	Sr.	Florida
2.	Sam Bradford	QB	Jr.	Oklahoma
3.	Colt McCoy	QB	Sr.	Texas
4.	Jahvid Best	RB	Jr.	California
5.	Jevan Snead	QB	Jr.	Ole Miss
6.	Dez Bryant	WR	Jr.	Oklahoma State
7.	Terrelle Pryor	QB	So.	Ohio State
8.	Zac Robinson	QB	Sr.	Oklahoma State
9.	Aaron Corp	QB	So.	USC
10.	C.J. Spiller	RB	Sr.	Clemson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COACHING CHANGES

This is the season for baby coaches — not coaches who are babies; that's a different subject. But of the 22 new bosses in new places, 14 of them start with a major-college record that is a blank slate.

Yes, more than a dozen of the nation's most eligible assistants — we're looking at you Ron English, Dan Mullen, Mike Locksley, Chip Kelly and Steve Sarkisian — finally punched their ticket to the big money, big office, and the big hotel room on road trips.

And, eventually, the big hot seat.

Speaking of hot seats, is it possible for a new coach to start there? It is if you're Tennessee's Lane Kiffin, who adds a dash of Tabasco — make that habanero sauce — to an already combustible mix of SEC coaches.

The coaching carousel spit out some good coaches in the offseason — sometimes by force, sometimes not — including six guys who had double-digit careers at their schools: Tennessee's Phil Fulmer (17 years), Oregon's Mike Bellotti (14), Purdue's Joe Tiller (12), New Mexico's Rocky Long (11), Clemson's Tommy Bowden (10) and Auburn's Tommy Tuberville (10).

It's a pretty good bet the two Tommys will be on this coaching changes list next season, except that they'll be in the "in" category and not the "out."

Here's the upshot of all the coaching changes:

ARMY

Out: Stan Brock (6-18, two seasons)
In: Rich Ellerson

This is the dream job for Ellerson, who comes from a military family and is coming off a successful stint at Division II Cal Poly (remember, the Mustangs nearly won at Wisconsin at the end of last season). He is expert in unique schemes — the triple-option on offense and the double-eagle flex defense that he used for Arizona's Desert Swarm teams in the 1990s.

AUBURN

Out: Tommy Tuberville (85-40, 10 seasons)
In: Gene Chizik

Hardly seems like an upgrade for the Tigers, who suddenly find themselves eating Alabama's dust. Tuberville's 2008 experiment on offense was a major flop, and the 5-7 season was the reason the administration needed to go another way. Just didn't think that road would lead to a former Auburn assistant who went 5-19 at Iowa State. Chizik, however, quickly put together a stellar staff and Top 20 recruiting class.

BALL STATE

Out: Brady Hoke (34-38, six seasons)
In: Stan Parrish

Hoke, after putting together a magical season with the Cardinals, left for San Diego State. Losing Hoke might hurt less than losing quarterback Nate Davis, who jumped early for the NFL. Scheme-wise, not much should change with the promotion of 62-year-old coordinator Parrish, who has a decade of head coaching experience at Wabash College, Marshall and Kansas State.

BOSTON COLLEGE

Out: Jeff Jagodzinski (20-8, two seasons)
In: Frank Spaziani

Coach Jag wanted to flirt with the NFL, but the Boston College administration didn't appreciate his playing footsie, so they canned him in favor of popular defensive coordinator Frank Spaziani. He will go back to a pro-style attack and keep searching for a quarterback in the fall.

BOWLING GREEN

Out: Gregg Brandon (44-30, six seasons)
In: Dave Clawson

Clawson emerges from the ashes of a disaster at Tennessee, where his hiring as coordinator before the 2008 season was supposed to usher in a "a new era of Tennessee offensive football." Well, it did usher in a new era for a new coaching staff. Meanwhile, Clawson, who will be 42 when the season starts, looks to re-polish the rising star he had as head coach at Richmond, where he was twice the FCS Coach of the Year. Brandon, meanwhile, landed as Virginia's offensive coordinator.

CLEMSON

Out: Tommy Bowden (72-45, 10 seasons)
In: Dabo Swinney

Swinney went 4-3 after taking over as interim coach for Bowden during last season, and the school made him the full-time coach before the bowl loss to Nebraska. Swinney is young (39) but picked up some veteran savvy when he and his coaching staff took an offseason trip to Austin to pick the brain of Texas coach Mack Brown.

EASTERN MICHIGAN

Out: Jeff Genyk (16-42, five seasons)
In: Ron English

This is a tough job. No coach has had a winning record at Eastern Michigan since Dan Boisture, who was 45-20-3 from 1967 to 1973. English, who mostly built his reputation as Michigan's defensive coordinator before coaching at Louisville last season, takes over a team that gave up a MAC-worst 427 points.

IOWA STATE

Out: Gene Chizik (5-19, two seasons)
In: Paul Rhoads

Basically a coach swap, as Chizik parlayed that stellar 5-19 record into the head coaching job at Auburn, which displaced Rhoads, who was the Tigers' defensive coordinator. Say this about Rhoads: He's a native of Ankeny, Iowa, and has deep roots to the area, including being a former member of ISU coach Dan McCarney's staff from 1995 to 1999. He's not necessarily looking to make a quick jump.

KANSAS STATE

Out: Ron Prince (17-20, three seasons)
In: Bill Snyder

A second go-round at the same school didn't work out so well for USC's John Robinson or Stanford's Bill Walsh in the 1990s. Snyder, who will turn 70 during the season, will attempt repeat magic at Kansas State, where he was 136-68-1 from 1989 to 2005, presiding over a rebuilding project so successful that Barry Switzer once said Snyder should be Coach of the Century. But he was talking about the other century.

MIAMI (OHIO)

Out: Shane Montgomery (17-31, four seasons)

Let's pretend this is a magic outlet.

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In: Mike Haywood

Haywood, who called plays for Notre Dame last season (well, at least until the last couple of games), gets his first head coaching gig, taking over a team in need of offensive improvement. The RedHawks failed to top 20 points in eight games last season, and they have a quarterback situation that won't be resolved until the fall.

MISSISSIPPI STATE

Out: Sylvester Croom (21-38, five seasons)
In: Dan Mullen

Some consider this the hardest coaching job in the SEC (yes, even worse than Vanderbilt, which at least has that academic thing going for it). But Mullen has the energy for the job, and the former Florida offensive coordinator has the chops in the spread offense that athletic directors covet. Give the new coach some quick credit: The Bulldogs had an announced crowd of 31,606 at the spring game — more than five times the number from the previous season.

NEW MEXICO

Out: Rocky Long (65-69, 11 years)
In: Mike Locksley

Locksley was a popular offensive coordinator at Illinois — and a heck of a recruiter wherever he's been — and he's shaking things up in Albuquerque with an up-tempo, no-huddle offense. This is the kind of program that could compete in the Mountain West every year.

NEW MEXICO STATE

Out: Hal Mumme (11-38, four seasons)
In: DeWayne Walker

The two teams in the state of New Mexico did well with hiring of young, in-demand coordinators (see above), but the Aggies opted for defense with Walker, the former coordinator at UCLA for Karl Dorrell and Rick Neuheisel. Walker has a lot of work to do, as the Aggies allowed 35 points per game across four seasons under Mumme, who took his passing offense and landed the head coaching job at Division III McMurry in Abilene, Texas.

OREGON

Out: Mike Bellotti (116-55, 14 seasons)
In: Chip Kelly

Bellotti stepped down before spring ball to take over as athletic director, ceding the Ducks, as planned, to offensive whiz Kelly, who was marvelous in the past two seasons coaxing superior performances from Dennis Dixon and Jeremiah Masoli. Kelly and his read-option should produce more national top 10 finishes in total offense. Further easing the transition, Bellotti stayed on during the spring to coach quarterbacks before Kelly made a permanent hire.

PURDUE

Out: Joe Tiller (87-62, 12 seasons)
In: Danny Hope

Hope surveyed the Purdue landscape last season as the offensive line coach and head-coach in-waiting. That landscape then changed, as the Boilermakers no longer have offensive standouts Curtis Painter, Kory Sheets, Greg Orton and Desmond Tardy. Could be a tough first season in West Lafayette.

SAN DIEGO STATE

Out: Chuck Long (9-27, three seasons)
In: Brady Hoke

"Sleeping giant" might be too strong of a label for the Aztecs, but how can only one of the past six SDSU head coaches, dating back almost three decades, have a winning record? San Diego State should be a consistent winner and hopes it finally hit the coaching lottery by nabbing Hoke from Bowling Green. Best news: He has two superb coordinators — Al Borges (offense) and Rocky Long (defense).

SYRACUSE

Out: Greg Robinson (10-37, four seasons)
In: Doug Marrone

Robinson never got it going, leaving Marrone a thin roster that does have some nice pieces on offense. Marrone, a first-time head coach, got the Orange's attention with a hard-hitting spring, but he'll have to string together some strong recruiting classes to make real progress.

TENNESSEE

Out: Phil Fulmer (152-52, 17 seasons)
In: Lane Kiffin

The signature coaching move of the offseason. Kiffin made himself an immediate lightning rod, becoming the coach most in need of a seven-second delay. Can the 34-year-old coach? Is there some substance behind Boy Smirk? He can recruit, and he does have the highest-paid assistant coaching staff in the country, which seems to make this a matter of when, not if.

TOLEDO

Out: Tom Amstutz (58-41, eight seasons)
In: Tim Beckman

Beckman has coached under Jim Tressel and Urban Meyer, so he has a couple pretty good blueprints for how to make this all work. Tressel once called the intense Beckman "tornadic" ... so it's no surprise Beckman ran a whirlwind of a spring practice, trying to toughen up the Rockets for their quest to end a streak of three consecutive losing seasons.

UTAH STATE

Out: Brent Guy (9-38, four seasons)
In: Gary Andersen

Andersen launched from the success at Utah, where he was a longtime assistant and, most recently, the defensive coordinator. He turned to Dave Baldwin to coordinate the offense, and the Aggies, like so many teams in transition, will go to a no-huddle spread.

WASHINGTON

Out: Tyrone Willingham (11-37, four seasons)
In: Steve Sarkisian

What's that about the penthouse and the outhouse? Sark took a dive in the standings, going from calling plays at USC to calling all the shots at winless Washington, hereby nominated — no, crowned — as the most disappointing program of the decade. Sarkisian, 35, spent the spring making friends and influencing boosters, immediately putting him a step ahead of Willingham.

WYOMING

Out: Joe Glenn (30-41, six seasons)
In: Dave Christensen

More of the same: New coach, new no-huddle spread offense. Christensen knows how it should look, serving most recently as the offensive coordinator at Missouri, whose fast-paced attack averaged 42.2 points and 484.1 yards last season. Alas, there's no Chase Daniel on the Cowboys' roster.

Where will you be sitting?

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BOBBY BOWDEN

Photo by Kirby Lee

LONGEST BOWL STREAKS

Michigan's consecutive bowl streak of 33, two short of Nebraska's NCAA record, ended in Rich Rodriguez's first season. The new bowl longevity champ is Florida State. Here are the only schools with double-digit bowl postseason streaks, keeping in mind that with 34 bowls, it basically only takes a .500 record to keep the streak alive these days:

27	Florida State
18	Florida
16	Virginia Tech
12	Georgia and Georgia Tech
11	Texas
10	Boston College and Oklahoma

LONGEST BOWL DROUGHTS

As with the longest bowl streak on the good side, the "bad" bowl streak also ended in 2008.

Vanderbilt, which hadn't been to the postseason since the 1982 Hall of Fame Classic, ended a 25-year bowl-less streak, and then the 'Dores acted as if they had been there before. Vandy went a few miles up the road to the Music City Bowl, ending yet another bowl streak by beating Boston College, 16-14. The Eagles had won eight bowls in a row, the longest run in the country.

With Vandy off the mat, it's now an inglorious race between two teams trying to get on the bowl express. Our money is on Baylor making it there first.

Here are the longest droughts (BCS teams only):

14	Baylor and Duke
7	Stanford
6	Washington
5	Washington State

Overall, New Mexico State has the nation's longest drought — 48 years and counting.

CONFERENCE OF QUARTERBACKS?

Step aside, Pac-10. You wish this category was about you.

We'll give you six Big 12 quarterbacks who are way better — or have a reasonable chance to be so — than anybody in the league formerly known as the Conference of Quarterbacks:

Sam Bradford, Colt McCoy, Zac Robinson, Todd Reesing, precocious sophomore Robert Griffin and whoever Texas Tech rolls out this season.

OK, that last guy would be sophomore Taylor Potts, who might finally be the kind of Red Raiders passer the NFL can love. He's 6-5 with a bigger arm than, say, the departed Graham Harrell. Check back on Potts' accuracy.

Meanwhile, the best the Pac-10 can do is Oregon's Jeremiah Masoli, who has to prove he's more than a one-year wonder, and Washington's Jake Locker, who missed most of last season with a thumb injury and has to show he really is Tebow Northwest, as he's been touted for three years.

Elsewhere in the Pac-10, there were spring quarterback battles of various degrees at Arizona, Arizona State, Cal, Stanford, UCLA, Washington State and, most famously, USC. Adding to the uncertainty, Oregon State starter Lyle Moevao underwent offseason surgery to reconstruct the rotator cuff in his throwing shoulder. How ready he is for fall camp is anyone's guess. Sean Canfield, come on down.

Not only does the Pac-10 have reason to be envious of the Big 12, it's looking up to the boys from the SEC. Let's call that league the Conference of *Elite* Quarterbacks.

Check it out: Five of the past 12 No. 1 draft picks have been SEC quarterbacks: Peyton Manning, Tim Couch, Eli Manning, JaMarcus Russell, and Matthew Stafford. In the same dozen years, only Carson Palmer was a No. 1 selection out of the Pac-10.

TODD REESING

Photo by Dennis Hubbard

TOP 12 NON-CONFERENCE GAMES

1. USC AT OHIO STATE, SEPT. 12

The Trojans won last year's game by knockout, 35-3, but the early season rematch is in Columbus and two rebuilt defenses are a gigantic X-factor. And OSU's Jim Tressel won't have to play musical quarterbacks this time around as the Buckeyes try to be more than a big-game punchline ... or punching bag.

2. ALABAMA VS. VIRGINIA TECH (ATLANTA), SEPT. 5

The Tide used last year's opener against Clemson, also in the Georgia Dome, as a springboard to an undefeated regular season. With new starting quarterback Greg McElroy, Nick Saban's guys will try to do the same against another ACC team trying to be more than a national pretender.

3. GEORGIA AT OKLAHOMA STATE, SEPT. 5

The Dawgs no longer have Matthew Stafford or Knowshon Moreno, while the Cowboys will put their skill players up against any group in the country.

4. OKLAHOMA AT MIAMI, OCT. 3

The mighty young Hurricanes — 10 projected starters are underclassmen — will be ready for this kind of game some day. Will that day be Oct. 3?

5. OREGON AT BOISE STATE, SEPT. 5

Nothing Boise State does should be shocking, but if the Broncos beat Oregon — as they did last season in Eugene — they could be on a fast track to a BCS bowl.

6. USC AT NOTRE DAME, OCT. 17

Do or die for the Irish and Charlie Weis? How many beatings can they take at the hands of USC? The past three games have been name-the-score affairs for the Trojans.

7. FLORIDA STATE AT FLORIDA, NOV. 28

BCS style points could be on the line in this late-season game for the Gators, who are making a thumping of the Seminoles an annual ritual. Florida has won five in a row by a combined 165-61. And, oh, do you really think Tim Tebow is going to lose his final home game at The Swamp?

8. GEORGIA AT GEORGIA TECH, NOV. 28

Georgia Tech was just getting started last season under coach Paul Johnson ... and the Jackets still managed to beat a preseason favorite for the national title, winning 45-42 after overcoming a 16-point halftime deficit. This rivalry should only get better.

9. NEBRASKA AT VIRGINIA TECH, SEPT. 19

How's this for an opening month for the Hokies: versus Alabama on a neutral field, and home to the Huskers and then Miami. Tech won this matchup last season, 35-30.

10. SOUTH FLORIDA AT FLORIDA STATE, SEPT. 26

It's the first meeting ever between these teams. With USF rising and FSU treading water, maybe we can soon call them rivals. The Bulls play host to Miami on Nov. 28 in another new-look state battle.

11. UCLA AT TENNESSEE, SEPT. 12

Perhaps this is more intriguing than an actual titanic clash. Early test for two programs trying to erase memories of a losing season.

12. ARMY VS. NAVY, DEC. 12 (PHILADELPHIA)

A new era of a grand rivalry, as Army coach Rich Ellerson tries to end the Black Knights' seven-game losing streak in the series.

Photo by John W. McDonough /Sports Illustrated/Getty Images

TOP 12 CONFERENCE GAMES

1. OKLAHOMA VS. TEXAS, OCT. 17 (DALLAS)

Last year proved you can't really say that the Big 12 South and a berth in the national title game is on the line ... but it sure looks that way from a distance.

2. FLORIDA AT LSU, OCT. 10

These schools have won the past three national championships, and it could be quite a treat if this is just a warm-up for a rematch in the SEC title game.

3. ALABAMA AT OLE MISS, OCT. 10

Combined with the No. 2 game on this list, we'll know a lot more about the SEC West after this Saturday. The Tide needed a late-game defensive stand to win last season's meeting 24-20 in Tuscaloosa.

4. TEXAS AT OKLAHOMA STATE, OCT. 31

This will be one day shy of the anniversary of Texas' only loss last season — on the road against a team with freakishly good offensive players. Sound familiar?

5. TENNESSEE AT FLORIDA, SEPT. 19

New UT coach Lane Kiffin popped off about Florida and untrue recruiting violations. How badly will the Gators turn around and pop the Vols in the mouth?

6. LSU AT ALABAMA, NOV. 7

Alabama snapped a five-game losing streak to the Tigers last season in what could become *the* game in the SEC West for many years.

7. OKLAHOMA STATE AT OKLAHOMA, NOV. 28

Could the Big 12 South be headed to a three-way tie again? This late-season game might have something to say about it.

8. OHIO STATE AT PENN STATE, NOV. 7

Ohio State quarterback Terrelle Pryor returns to his home state in a clash of the Big Ten's top two teams in the preseason.

9. LSU AT OLE MISS, NOV. 21

The Rebels won 31-13 last season in Baton Rouge, but young Tigers' quarterback Jordan Jefferson was just getting started late in the season. He'll be a vet in the rematch.

10. USC AT CAL, OCT. 3

The Pac-10's full round-robin puts the Trojans on the road for their two toughest league games, including an Oct. 31 matchup against Oregon.

11. OHIO STATE AT MICHIGAN, NOV. 21

Rich Rodriguez's first dip into the rivalry ended in a 42-7 dunking by the Buckeyes. The gap has to be closing, doesn't it? At least a little?

12. VIRGINIA TECH AT GEORGIA TECH, OCT. 17

Just a little fun fact: These two teams — possibly the two finest in the ACC — combined to throw fewer passes (456) last season than 23 teams.

Photo by Bob Rosato /Sports Illustrated/Getty Images

SNEAK PEEK

Here is our annual look ahead to the NFL Draft, a full year in advance. This Top 50 list, from our pals at NFLdraftscout.com, consists only of seniors. Of course, many juniors — or third-year sophomores — will come out, too, but that's even harder to predict.

These days, even Heisman winners tend to come back to school.

We don't want to get too far ahead of ourselves, but it's a good idea to be aware of a half-dozen top juniors for the 2010 draft: Oklahoma QB Sam Bradford, Tennessee SS Eric Berry, Oklahoma DT Gerald McCoy, Illinois WR Arrelious Benn, Alabama LB Rolando McClain and Arizona TE Rob Gronkowski. Some positions may indicate professional futures.

NO.	SENIORS ONLY	POS.	SCHOOL
1.	Taylor Mays	FS	Southern California
2.	Russell Okung	OT	Oklahoma State
3.	Jermaine Gresham	TE	Oklahoma
4.	Mark Herzlich	OLB	Boston College
5.	Colt McCoy	QB	Texas
6.	Ndamukong Suh	DT	Nebraska
7.	Sergio Kindle	OLB	Texas
8.	Brandon Spikes	ILB	Florida
9.	Terrence Cody	DT	Alabama
10.	Trent Williams	OT	Oklahoma
11.	Tim Tebow	QB	Florida
12.	Trevard Lindley	CB	Kentucky
13.	C.J. Spiller	RB	Clemson
14.	Brandon LaFell	WR	LSU
15.	Sean Weatherspoon	OLB	Missouri
16.	Ciron Black	OT	LSU
17.	Greg Hardy	DE	Mississippi
18.	Adam Ulatoski	OT	Texas
19.	DeMarcus Granger	DT	Oklahoma
20.	Antonio Coleman	OLB	Auburn
21.	George Selvie	DE	South Florida
22.	Geno Atkins	DT	Georgia
23.	Mardy Gilyard	WR	Cincinnati
24.	Chris Brown	RB	Oklahoma
25.	Javier Arenas	CB	Alabama
26.	Jerry Hughes	OLB	TCU
27.	Sergio Render	OG	Virginia Tech
28.	Brandon Lang	DE	Troy
29.	Rico McCoy	OLB	Tennessee
30.	Brandon Graham	DE	Michigan
31.	Dennis Pitta	TE	Brigham Young
32.	Sam Young	OT	Notre Dame
33.	Kyle Wilson	CB	Boise State
34.	C.J. Wilson	DE	East Carolina
35.	Arthur Jones	DT	Syracuse
36.	Jordan Shipley	WR	Texas
37.	Crezdon Butler	CB	Clemson
38.	Darrell Stuckey	SS	Kansas
39.	Mike Johnson	OG	Alabama
40.	Kam Chancellor	FS	Virginia Tech
41.	Garrett Graham	TE	Wisconsin
42.	John Estes	C	Hawaii
43.	Myron Lewis	CB	Vanderbilt
44.	Eric Decker	WR	Minnesota
45.	Zane Beadles	OT	Utah
46.	Anthony McCoy	TE	Southern California
47.	Jermaine Cunningham	DE	Florida
48.	Stevenson Sylvester	OLB	Utah
49.	Sean Lee	ILB	Penn State
50.	Corey Wootton	DE	Northwestern

Photo by John Williamson

RUSSELL OKUNG

LAME KIFFIN OR IS HE?

VOLS COACH KNOWS HOW TO ATTRACT ATTENTION

By Dennis Dodd

Photo by Patrick Murphy-Racey /Sports Illustrated/Getty Images

If you've come here to read how Tennessee's new coach is going to yap his way out of a job he has barely started, it ain't happening.

But if you think college football's youngest, certainly most cocksure coach has kicked off his career going negative, well, you're right.

There have been at least three secondary NCAA violations. He called out Florida — twice. Maybe insulted the entire state of South Carolina. Ticked off the SEC. In the process, he has made Al Davis look practically lucid.

All that without even ... you know, actually coaching a college game. No one is that dumb are they?

"Lane Kiffin understood it right away," recruiting analyst Tom Lemming said.

"I guarantee Tennessee is going to be fighting for the title. In two or three years, they're going to be right back up there. Not because of coaching, because of recruiting. These guys are everywhere; they're relentless."

You know, now, that Kiffin gets it. We're all being played. The networks. The writers. The players. Gator Nation. Even Vol Nation.

You either get it along with him or you're missing the biggest college football story of 2009. Embrace the Smirk.

Kiffin, 34, has chosen to come into the head coaching profession by whipping out a scalpel and making an incision. You're either Lane or Lane Bait.

This is Marketing 101. Kiffin knows full well there is no such thing as bad publicity, especially when top recruits had begun to ignore the school. It's become clear the Gators are obsessed with this new phenomenon in their craw.

Hate is a wonderful thing, especially when it can be turned against you.

You should remember Kiffin's false signing day claims that Urban Meyer "cheated" to get recruit Nu'Keese Richardson. You remember Florida athletic director Jeremy Foley and the SEC freaking out. You also remember Kiffin's apology by the end of the same day.

Hee-hee. It seems like the joke is on everybody else.

Shortly before his press conference kicking off spring practice, someone showed Kiffin a cell phone picture of one of his famous quotes now hanging in the Gators' new Heavener Football Complex.

"I'm really looking forward to embracing some of the great traditions at the University of Tennessee," Kiffin said the day he was hired. "For instance the Vol Walk, running through the T, singing Rocky Top all night long after we beat Florida next year. It will be a blast."

Glancing at the phone picture, the coach smiled and said, "Beautiful. Awesome. Wonderful. They even put our logo on it. Free advertising and we didn't have to pay for it."

Never mind that mild-mannered Jim Tressel basically did the same thing after he was hired, calling out Michigan at halftime of a basketball game. That was cute. Different conference. Different time. This is the SEC.

The Gator message boards are filled with Lame Kiffin bombast. The columnists have bit on the worm. How dare a coach who failed in the NFL and hasn't coached a college game for a school that hasn't won squat since 1998 taunt the defending national champs!?

They still don't get it. Kiffin wants you to hate him. Or love him. It doesn't matter. Just talk about him. Show his mug on television. Get "Tennessee" or "Vols" in the headline.

"The best way to do it is to get our colors, our helmet in *Sports Illustrated*, in *USA Today*," Kiffin said, "because this isn't the NFL. This is about recruiting. Every freshman, every sophomore, every junior in America saw Tennessee over these last couple of weeks. They're seeing the 'T' again; they're seeing the colors."

Kiffin gets it because he understands that in the SEC unless you get players, everything else is fluff.

First, he got the best coaches he could find (and buy). His 69-year-old dad, Monte, made a monumental move from the Tampa Bay Buccaneers back to college to become the defensive coordinator. Lane still crows about ripping master recruiter Lance Thompson from Alabama. Offensive coordinator Jim Chaney is the answer to this question: Who was Drew Brees' OC at Purdue?

Brother-in-law David Reaves came from South Carolina, a blow to the Ol' Ball Coach. Kiffin reportedly tried to snag Florida receivers coach Billy Gonzales while the Gators were preparing for the national championship game. Georgia's Rodney Garner apparently turned down a $400,000-per-year offer.

The staff makes a combined $5.25 million, huge money, but also in line with the goal to get this thing turned around: Get the coaches; recruit like hell; and resurrect UT. While you're at it, let everyone know you're coming.

"You better keep up or you show up like a sore thumb," Chaney said of his 5:15 a.m.-to-9 p.m. work days. "We want high energy. We are passionate. It's not manufactured; it's real."

Kiffin understands that folks had stopped talking about Tennessee. When they did mention the Vols in mixed company, it was about what went wrong in a 5-7 season that cost Fulmer his job. That and how God-awful it was to watch a unit that was fifth-worst nationally in total offense.

Kiffin sold the fact that he called plays for back-to-back Pac-10 champions in 2005-06 and helped Reggie Bush win a Heisman. The disastrous dalliance as head coach of the Oakland Raiders? Kiffin looks at it as though he couldn't lose.

The Raiders were horrible when he got there. If he turned it around, he was a miracle worker. If he didn't, it was just more of Davis' incompetence.

For a while at UT, it looked like whenever Kiffin opened his mouth, Oakland's Crypt Keeper gained credibility. But by mid-March, after only 3 1/2 months on the job, Kiffin snagged No. 1 recruit Bryce Brown out of Wichita. Another brick in the recruiting wall.

"I love Tennessee and Coach Kiffin," Brown told reporters. "He doesn't back down."

"I told him, in this state it's Dolly Parton, Elvis and you," athletic director Mike Hamilton said of his coach. "Not necessarily in that order."

Said All-American defensive back Eric Berry: "Whatever it is, I feel like this staff has it."

Berry chose his words carefully. He doesn't want to disparage his former coach. No one does inside the football

"I TOLD HIM, IN THIS STATE IT'S DOLLY PARTON, ELVIS AND YOU," ATHLETIC DIRECTOR MIKE HAMILTON SAID OF HIS COACH. "NOT NECESSARILY IN THAT ORDER."

Photo by Jim Brown-US PRESSWIRE

complex. The anti-Fulmer fans got their way, but that's not what this is about. Kiffin himself knew he had to endear himself to a populace that had seen only two head coaches in the past 32 years.

Apathetic was never a word associated with Neyland Stadium. But there they were last season: Empty seats. A glorious empire in decline.

Berry remembers his coach's first meeting with the players. There was something in the air. The upheaval of a coaching change. The defense, he said, had "separated" from the offense.

"It was just a little awkward," Berry said.

"I think he gained a lot of respect in that first meeting. A lot of people were probably making it seem like he was responsible for getting Coach Fulmer fired. As soon as he spoke, I think the players felt better. We felt like we all needed to get on the bandwagon and make this thing work."

What did the coach say? New era. All the jobs are open. There will be no conditioning after practice because practice is conditioning.

A coach's son born in Minnesota — but one who has also lived in Nebraska, Arkansas, Green Bay, Buffalo, Long Island, Fresno, Colorado, Jacksonville, L.A. and Oakland — was laying down the law.

As USC's recruiting coordinator, Kiffin went head-to-head with SEC schools, bringing prizes back to the West Coast. Kiffin went right into Nashville several years ago and snatched up prized receiver Patrick Turner. Think that left a mark in Knoxville?

Kiffin makes sense because the SEC doesn't laugh at itself much. Great football, but with clenched jaws. There's just not enough Steve Spurrier anymore, especially since The Ol' Ball Coach began to lose his fastball at South Carolina. Even Spurrier understands you can't tweak the nose of someone who beats your butt.

Before the Vols can win again, they have to lighten up. The players are mostly clueless to the fact Kiffin was involved in a heated legal battle with the Raiders over his contract. They either don't know or don't care that defensive line coach Ed Orgeron was a failure as a head coach at Ole Miss.

"It's contagious," Berry said. "You wake up at 5 in the morning and see Coach O in his office drinking Red Bull and coffee. We don't have a choice but to be excited."

Excited? With some key prospects gathered in a meeting room during the offseason, several coaches burst in, topless. Not that there is anything wrong with that. However, in the Deep South it is against the code. You know the one: State troopers at the postgame handshake. A lot of polyester and hounds tooth.

Half-naked screaming coaches? Son, you ain't from around here are you?

"It's the best story you could ever have," Kiffin said. "You can't get all these recruits on your campus. You've got to convince them to take an official visit. What better way when they read about this?

"We had numerous kids the next day (say), 'This was the best junior day I was ever at.' They had a blast. They said, 'These coaches are so intense, so high energy. You can tell they're going to win here. Tennessee is at the top of my list now.'"

Forget about everyone else, what does dad think?

Monte is the legend, smiling all the time, kind of half limping through the day, telling jokes and reviewing film with players. There have been no worries about an NFL coordinator coming back to college after 27 years away.

In recruiting, he has been the Vols' closer. For this generation of players, there is every chance they know Monte from the NFL more than they know his son from the NFL.

"If you can't do it right for him, who can you do it right for?" linebacker Rico McCoy said.

The strange thing is, the D last season was not the problem. Tennessee finished tied for third in total defense. Lane has made sure it stays that way, even if dad did have to take a pay cut to become the nation's highest paid coordinator ($1.2 million).

"Whether he was here or not, I talk to him every day on the phone," Lane said. "It's not that exciting that my dad's down the hall. Maybe that sounds shallow. It's because I know how well our defense is going to be coached."

The reality is that Tennessee doesn't figure to be a factor in the SEC East this fall. In his fantastic first class, Kiffin didn't recruit a quarterback. All the best ones were already locked up. He preferred to get in on current juniors who will be available in 2010.

Florida will still be waiting in Gainesville on that third Saturday of the season.

Kiffin won't be very well liked that day.

"I think at some point we all liked to be liked," Hamilton said.

In Kiffin's case, the only ones he's worried about liking him are his future Vols.

Dennis Dodd is a senior writer for CBSSports.com.

SARKISIAN & KIFFIN:

JUST LIKE THEY DREW IT UP

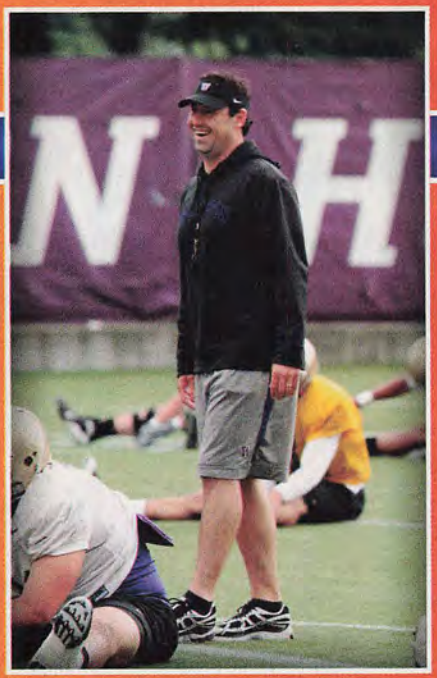

Photo Courtesy of the University of Washington

Steve Sarkisian and Lane Kiffin never hid their ambitions.

As each grew in stature while helping return USC to its standing as one of the great college football dynasties, the two young coaches — who would eventually become co-offensive coordinators for the Trojans — would often talk about head coaching jobs at other schools.

"We'd rank them," Sarkisian said. "All kinds of fun stuff. It's funny that we both got a job to be head coaches at schools that were ranked very high on our list eight years ago."

Today, some might think Kiffin got the better start to his collegiate head coaching career. He's at Tennessee. Sarkisian landed at Washington — a job Kiffin was also said to be interested in when it opened in late October, though indications are that the Huskies never really looked his way.

Sarkisian's task is to remake a UW program coming off the worst extended run in school history — a 12-47 record the past five seasons, capped by an 0-12 mark last year under Tyrone Willingham.

Sarkisian was the somewhat surprising choice after a lengthy search in which UW also interviewed the likes of Mike Leach and Will Muschamp. UW officials, however, said they were impressed by the energy and innovation of the 35-year-old Sarkisian, who immediately launched both a Twitter page and his own blog to try to reconnect the program with the public.

Sarkisian, as might be expected, doesn't quite think he got a shorter straw than Kiffin.

"I think the challenges are different," he said.

"We both have issues to address to get our team back to winning conference championships. But I wouldn't say that one job is more difficult than the other. They are both challenges, but I think the rewards for each job are great."

While this is the first head coaching job of any kind for Sarkisian, Kiffin has already been a head coach with the Oakland Raiders for one season and part of another — a job Sarkisian turned down before Al Davis turned to Kiffin.

But the two have remained tight throughout.

"We're close," Sarkisian said. "We talk three, four times a week."

Some also look at them and wonder if they aren't essentially twin sons of different mothers. Not only is their coaching pedigree similar, but also much of their philosophy.

Upon taking over their new programs this winter, both re-embraced the public and the past at their new schools, inviting alums back and declaring practices open — something that had been a galling bone of contention at UW under the closeted Willingham.

Both also incurred similar secondary NCAA violations early in their tenure for using a fog machine while having recruits run onto the field during visits — a no-no per rules saying schools can't replicate a game-day environment.

But so far, Sarkisian hasn't copied Kiffin's ability to have his mouth land him in hot water. If anything, some around the UW program have marveled at Sarkisian's smoothness in the public arena in his first months on the job.

"I think we are kind of raised in the same football family," Sarkisian said.

"But like any family, people are different. I think we have our own style — we are individuals that way. Some of the structure of what we do is the same, but we are going to do things that are the best way to get things done.

"But what I appreciate about Lane and myself is we are grown enough men to make our own decisions and move on and keep our relationship strong."

— Bob Condotta

CARROLL'S COACHING TREE

Five major-college head coaches, including three new ones, have coached under Pete Carroll at USC. The first two weren't very successful.

COACH	AT USC	AS COLLEGE HEAD COACH
Nick Holt	2001-03, 2006-current	Was 5-18 at Idaho, 2004-05
Ed Orgeron	2001-04	Was 10-25 at Ole Miss, 2005-07
Lane Kiffin	2001-06	First year at Tennessee
Steve Sarkisian	2001-03, 2005-08	First year at Washington
DeWayne Walker	2001	First year at New Mexico State

Photo by Joel Auerbach-Us Presswire

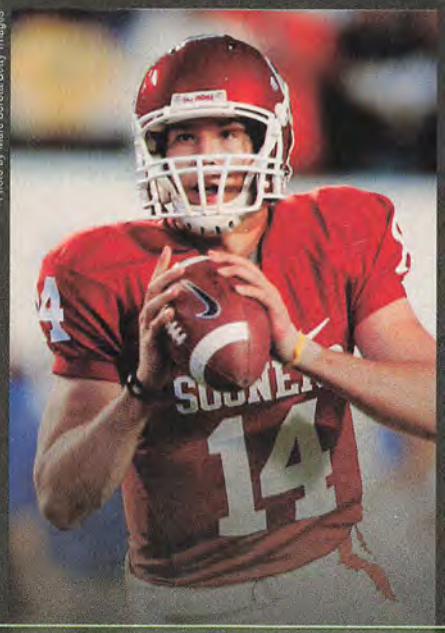

Photo by Marc Serota-Getty Images

Photo by Bruce L. Schwartzman

THE THREE AMIGOS RETURN

TEBOW, BRADFORD, MCCOY SET STAGE FOR EPIC SEASON

BY DENNIS DODD

A day before the BCS national championship game, college football's most famous evangelical minister was eager to talk about college football's most famous player.

So eager that Bob Tebow paused only to put down his cell phone between shots. Papa Tebow was playing golf with his sons in the Florida sunshine when the question was posed: What do you think of those who doubt Tim's ability to be an NFL quarterback?

"That's hysterical, hilarious," Bob said. "All the quarterback problems they have in the NFL? He'll be a quarterback in the NFL. It's hard to even comment on it without saying something about the person's intelligence who is making that comment."

Don't get too deluded by a father's love. The answer is as legitimate as the question, which seemingly has been floating around since Tebow was part of his first of two national championships in 2006. He is so different, so unique, and so genuine that coaches, fans and critics have a hard time placing him.

Yet, an overriding thought remains: Those who have orbited his aura have come away better persons and athletes.

"I don't know if he's the best passer. I don't know if he has the best arm," said former teammate Percy Harvin. "I do think he'll go down as the most dominating player to play college football."

If that's the case, then what does that say about the Heisman race for this year?

All three finalists are back. All three spurned NFL riches. All three could end up in the same front-row seats they were in last December in New York, their butt grooves already worn in.

Tebow, Oklahoma's Sam Bradford and Texas' Colt McCoy. Call them the game's Three Amigos.

They have won three national championships and two Heismans. Their presence makes this potentially the best year for major-college quarterbacks since 1982 when Dan Marino, Jim Kelly and John Elway all came out. Maybe better.

But why do we want to let go so soon? Bradford would have been a top 10 NFL draft choice but stayed even after winning the Heisman. McCoy was tempted to leave more than anyone knows. Tebow is so accomplished that pundits have long been arguing over whether his quarterback talents translate to the NFL.

That perturbs Bob Tebow, among others.

"He's got *it*, man," said new Florida offensive line coach Steve Addazio. "I've been around this game a long time. I've heard all this 'fundamental' and that 'pretty spiral'. At the end of the day who's got *it*?"

Actually, the Three Amigos all have *it*.

But let's not talk NFL Draft power just yet. It's more about the sizzle, anticipation. Another version of musical chairs when three top-flight teams can't fit into the two slots reserved for January, this time in the Rose Bowl.

An entire set of finalists have never returned together for the Heisman ceremony the next year. The closest that could have happened is 1946. Army's Doc Blanchard won the trophy in 1945. Teammate Glenn Davis was second. The next year Davis won it and Blanchard finished fourth.

One problem: The Heisman folks didn't invite finalists to New York until 1983.

USC's Matt Leinart was the winner in 2004 and a finalist (third overall) in 2005. Two former Heisman winners have never returned as finalists, mostly because until 2007 a sophomore (Tebow) had never won the award. Bradford made it two in a row in '08.

But if you assembled a short list for the Heisman in 2009, how do you pick against the Three Amigos once again sitting in the front row in December?

Tebow, already armed with two championship rings, couldn't leave Gator Nation's love and devotion. McCoy returns to a loaded Texas squad as the most accurate single-season passer in Football Bowl Subdivision history. Bradford listened to his coaches, his family, the NFL Draft evaluators — and his heart.

A bigger deal should have been made out of it. The Jan. 15 deadline for players to

declare for the draft turned out to be a giant collective gift to college football fans.

Bradford was the tipping point for the annual underclassman declarations. Against all odds, and maybe logic, the Heisman winner decided to stay. The return of Bradford, Tebow and McCoy means the top three teams in the final 2008 coaches poll will return more or less intact in 2009.

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As flashbacks go, it was a doozy for Bradford. You don't have your brain scrambled and come out the back end without a reminder.

"I remember waking up the next morning and having the biggest headache of my life," Bradford said.

The reigning Heisman Trophy winner sat in the lobby of Oklahoma's football facility recounting not only his painful concussion three years ago, but also that of his friend Blake Griffin.

Both had been concussed, badly. Griffin, OU's former power forward, missed a couple of games in February after a mysterious hit against Texas. Bradford had his head slammed to the turf at Texas Tech in 2007.

They both emerged from the pain to become the second set of players from the same school to win Heisman and National Basketball Player of the Year honors.

"You're trying so hard to get it back together and you can't," said Oklahoma coach Bob Stoops, who has seen his share of concussions. "I know the frustration. You don't even remember you asked somebody (something)."

Griffin got out after two seasons, figuring if he was going to get hurt, he might as well get paid. Bradford? If 2007 ended with scrambled synapses, then 2008 was the polar opposite.

He might have been the most protected Heisman winner in history, considering he was sacked only 13 times. That will not necessarily be the case in 2009 — neither the Heisman nor staying upright. Stoops must replace three starters on his offensive line. It didn't help the outlook when OU's coach had to call out his line prior to spring practice.

So why subject yourself to all that uncertainty? Bradford has suffered that concussion. He has won a Heisman, and led the most prolific offense in modern history (716 points). What is there left to prove? Lots, it turns out.

"It was one of those things where I never could get myself to be 100 percent (committed) to leaving," Bradford said. "There were some reasons I could have left and should have left. There were a lot more benefits for me to come back another year to mature."

It's clear that someone — actually a lot of people — got to Bradford. Shortly after returning from the bowl game, he sat down with quarterbacks coach Josh Heupel.

"Before you decide to enter the draft everything you hear is positive," said Bradford, a rising redshirt junior. "The minute you declare for the draft, head coaches, GMs are looking at you trying to find what's wrong with you. They're trying to find a reason not to draft you."

Bradford listened to the scouts who said he needed to gain weight and just *play*. He has started only 28 career games.

"You can always get quicker at recognizing defenses," he said. "Maybe picking up the small things in a defense that gives away if they're going to blitz. I feel like I'm pretty comfortable seeing the big things."

The big things led to 50 touchdowns and only eight interceptions. His uniform literally didn't get dirty for much of the season. That last stat could almost be a drawback. Scouts want to see Bradford react under pressure, how tough he is after he gets smacked in the mouth.

Oklahoma is so good that flaws in a quarterback could be hidden, only to become apparent because the NFL team he is likely to play with could be so bad.

"He chuckled at the notion that he is a finished product," Stoops said.

"He said, 'Coach, I know I'm going to get better.' He felt like he didn't luck out and have a couple of good years here. This is him. He's going to get better by natural growth, strength, and maturity."

In 10 years on the job, Stoops has lost fewer than 10 underclassmen. His message is getting through. Unless you're in financial straits and/or a slam-dunk top 10 pick, it's not worth it.

"There's a lot of people who think it's a for-sure thing I'm coming out after next year," Bradford said.

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It had to be the signature play of Tebow's career. It had to be a jump pass.

That particular play is how we began the Tebow story almost three years ago. Tebow amazed a nation — Gator and the U.S. — against LSU in October 2006. The freshman took only 15 snaps that day but was able to throw for two touchdowns and run for another in a 23-10 victory.

It was a jump pass to Tate Casey that everyone remembers. Like a pull-up jumper, Tebow half shot putted it into the hands of his tight end.

"That put the jump pass on the map," former offensive coordinator Dan Mullen said.

In January, Tebow picked out 6-5 David

SAM BRADFORD

PASSING

Season	2007	2008	Totals
Comp	237	328	565
Att	341	483	824
Yds	3,121	4,720	7,841
TDs	36	50	86
INTs	8	8	16

RUSHING

Season	2007	2008	Totals
Att	31	42	73
Yds	7	47	54
TDs	0	5	5

COLT MCCOY

PASSING

Season	2006	2007	2008	Totals
Comp	217	276	332	825
Att	318	424	433	1,175
Yds	2,570	3,303	3,859	9,732
TDs	29	22	34	85
INTs	7	18	8	33

RUSHING

Season	2006	2007	2008	Totals
Att	68	114	136	318
Yds	170	492	561	1,223
TDs	2	4	11	17

TIM TEBOW

PASSING

Season	2006	2007	2008	Totals
Comp	22	234	192	448
Att	33	350	298	681
Yds	358	3,286	2,746	6,390
TDs	5	32	30	67
INTs	1	6	4	11

RUSHING

Season	2006	2007	2008	Totals
Att	89	210	176	475
Yds	469	895	673	2,037
TDs	8	23	12	43

Nelson with the 4-yard insurance touchdown (jump) pass in Florida's 24-14 BCS title game victory over Oklahoma. In only the second title game to feature two Heisman Trophy-winning quarterbacks, Tebow hurdled several more tall buildings.

Tebow has grown from novelty act to one of the greatest college quarterbacks ever. All he has left to chase is a third national championship and a second Heisman. By the end of this year, he could be the GOAT — Greatest Of All Time.

"If he develops like he will next year, we will be hard-pressed to put anyone above him," Mullen said before departing to become Mississippi State's head coach. "He might not be the best quarterback, best this, best that. Best football player? He might be."

Oklahoma defensive back Dominique Franks made headlines at the BCS title game when he said Tebow would have been the fourth-best quarterback in the talent-rich Big 12 last season.

"I'm just thankful for being fourth," said Tebow, whose real reply came against the Sooners.

He might play two years in the NFL, he might play 15. But at some point, his entire life is going to be directed to spreading his faith. The NFL is merely the next goal.

"Overall, I just felt loyal to this place," he said. "I feel like I'm a role model, and a lot of times people start things and don't finish them. I didn't want to be like that."

What, exactly, does he have left to prove? In between golf shots that day, Bob Tebow said: "Most people are just very skeptical."

They can't believe, he says, that his son is so squeaky clean. They can't believe he drinks a glass of milk the night before a big game or that he enjoys Sinatra.

"Send in the Clowns," Tim said proudly.

True, Tebow has missed on 34 percent of his career passes (a 66-percent completion rate isn't bad.) He doesn't pick up every third-and-short.

But he does show up at 6 a.m. to work out with the offensive linemen when other teammates are still catching zzzs. He is probably one of the few quarterbacks anywhere who could jump into a defensive huddle and urge on the unit to a big stop without getting clocked. (See the SEC championship game.)

"There are fake counterfeit 20 dollar bills out there," Bob Tebow said. "That doesn't stop you from spending your real 20 dollar bills in the world."

• • • • •

Colt McCoy walked out of an Amazon jungle for the second consecutive spring this year with a renewed sense of self — and a beard.

"I guess that's kind of a hot topic isn't it?" he said. "We didn't shave for about seven days."

For a Heisman candidate who looks like he could pass for a junior high prom king, it was a talking point.

Like Tebow, McCoy's Christian values take center stage. In 2008, he decided to give up his worldly comforts in the offseason for a week in order to travel to Peru as part of a mission trip to help youth in the Amazon Basin. Texas coaches were concerned when he returned having lost 15 pounds.

This year his group brought a cook, along with Frisbees, soccer balls, footballs and extra clothes. The idea was not to return with any of it.

"We made that the No. 1 focus in our lives, to be with them," McCoy said.

There is a decision to be made on Amazon Trip No. 3 in 2010. It likely would conflict with his duties as an NFL employee.

McCoy chose not to come out after his redshirt junior season. His team was a last-second loss away from winning the Big 12 South and perhaps playing for the national championship.

That Nov. 1 loss at Texas Tech was the razor-thin difference between Oklahoma winning the Big 12 South and ultimately playing Florida in the BCS title game. Had freshman defensive back Blake Gideon not dropped an interception, or Tech's Michael Crabtree not made a stunning game-winning touchdown catch-and-run with one second left, McCoy was closer to jumping to the NFL than most people think.

"It was a tough decision, a really tough decision," McCoy said. "It's been a dream of mine."

ALL THREE FINALISTS ARE BACK. ALL THREE SPURNED NFL RICHES. ALL THREE COULD END UP IN THE SAME FRONT-ROW SEATS THEY WERE IN LAST DECEMBER IN NEW YORK, THEIR BUTT GROOVES ALREADY WORN IN.

McCoy and his family took advantage of the NFL Draft board, a group of experts who assess a prospect's draft position.

"It was one that I probably shouldn't have turned down," McCoy admitted.

McCoy set the NCAA accuracy record last season (76.7 percent) while also leading the Horns in rushing. He is the Southwestern version of Tebow, almost too good to believe off the field while being a killer on it.

In the end, the lure of chasing the one that got away was too much. Texas is loaded going into 2009. McCoy was almost a one-man offense at times last season. His receivers were smallish. There was no go-to running back. He simply ran away from pressure with his legs (a team-leading 561 rushing yards).

Four starters return on the offensive line. The running backs don't blow you away, but they have to get better don't they? As long as the Big 12 tiebreaker doesn't get in the way again, Texas should face a de facto championship game play-in against Oklahoma in October.

It could have been a mess, of course. Ryan Perrilloux could have been the Texas quarterback.

It was great for the Horns back then when the nation's top prep player committed to Mack Brown. Then the kid started making crazy talk. He wanted to win the Heisman as a freshman.

Texas hadn't realized it, but Perrilloux really was not the kind of player they wanted. Perrilloux waffled. Nothing wrong with that. He signed with LSU. Really, nothing wrong with that. Brown had a contingency plan ... but that almost didn't work, either.

Texas came in late on a quarterback from Southlake, Texas, named Chase Daniel. What Texas wants, Texas gets.

In this case, though, Daniel had long since become enamored with Gary Pinkel's offense, which was almost exactly the same he had run at powerhouse Southlake. Daniel himself chased a Heisman in 2007 and led Missouri to the No. 1 ranking.

Luckily, Brown had offered a skinny kid from Tuscola in 2005. It was the only quarterback in his recruiting class. That year Texas won the national championship with Vince Young.

Who knew that three years later, the post-Young era might turn out to be better at Texas?

And for college football, 2009 might be the best.

Dennis Dodd is a senior writer for CBSSports.com

LINDY'S ASKS THE DRAFT EXPERTS

Lindy's Football Annuals asked a group of NFL Draft experts to weigh in on the strengths and weaknesses of Tim Tebow, Sam Bradford and Colt McCoy:

ON TEBOW:

"He needed to stay in school. As great as he is as a college quarterback, there are major questions about him on the next level. Can he take snaps from center? What about that poor footwork? How strong is the arm? Working with new quarterback coach Scot Loeffler will help him this year. He will improve his footwork and work on taking snaps from center. I think the arm is strong enough. Do I think he can play quarterback in the next level? Yes. But it will take a couple of years of work to get him out of the bad habits that Florida offense has instilled in him."

"NFL scouts are not impressed with his work as a pure passer. His arm strength is unquestioned, but his ability to read defenses from the pocket, anticipate his receivers' routes and deliver a pass into a tight window have not been proven. But his leadership and toughness will endear him to coaches at the next level; in fact, teams will consider him a top fullback — or even a Wildcat quarterback — prospect if he is unable to improve his footwork and shorten his deliberate throwing motion."

"Tebow appears to have the intelligence and work ethic to learn both mechanics and new offenses quickly. NFL teams may find themselves warming up to Tebow as a quarterback prospect throughout the 2009 season and postseason, much like they did West Virginia's Pat White."

ON BRADFORD:

"Bradford is one of the most accurate quarterbacks in recent memory. His ability to stand in the pocket and deliver short, intermediate and deep throws on-time and on the mark is remarkable. However, Oklahoma's offensive line loses four starters this fall. That means the lanky quarterback might be forced to prove for the first time that he can consistently make plays under pressure, take multiple big hits in a game and throw accurately on the run. If he does those things, then the inevitable comparisons to Peyton Manning will begin."

"I was shocked he decided to stay. He was a sure top-10 pick. He's deadly accurate, and the league loves that. There is concern in the scouting community that he might be a product of the offense. They play such an up-tempo style that he could be hurt by that on the next level. Plus, there was loads of talent on that side of the ball last year. There is also some talk that his arm isn't great. But I think it's plenty strong enough. If you asked me to compare him to Mark Sanchez ... I'd take Bradford."

"He has a combination of size, intelligence and accuracy that no other quarterback in the country can match. He does not own a howitzer, but has plenty of arm strength to make every NFL throw and is remarkably refined in his setup and delivery, considering his relative lack of experience.

"The concern people have with Bradford is that he has a wiry frame that may not be able to handle the punishment of the NFL. He was protected by one of the best offensive lines in the country in 2008 and will have to prove that he can throw accurately with rushers bearing down on him. If he can enjoy similar success in 2009 — with fresh, inexperienced faces up front and at wide receiver — his rating will go up considerably."

ON MCCOY:

"McCoy took a big step toward becoming a top prospect as a junior, adding bulk and displaying leadership, moxie, accuracy and mobility. McCoy doesn't have a prototypical NFL quarterback frame (6-3, 210), plays in a spread offense, and lacks the rocket arm and consistent footwork teams look for in a first-round pick.

"It will also be difficult for him to match his ridiculous statistics from last season. Even if he doesn't, he can improve enough in his mechanics and arm strength over the next year to make teams consider him as a first-day, if not first-round selection."

"He made the right decision going back to school. I think he needs to get stronger. He's a tough kid, but he's frail. The knock on him is whether his arm strength is good enough. I think it is.

"The thing that draws me to him is how accurate he is as a passer. The ball is always there on time and hits receivers in stride. He also has mobility to move around the pocket, which the NFL loves. I'm not sure he's the next Matt Ryan, but he does have that same feel to him. ...

"Of the three, McCoy has the traits to rank as the top pro-style passer due to his size, mobility and experience. He has enough arm strength to make every NFL pass, though an area he can improve upon is in putting more loft under his deeper throws.

"McCoy's statistical accuracy is outstanding, but he benefitted a bit from the quick-hitting offense Texas runs, as well as consistent route-running and hands from his primary receivers. McCoy can improve his stock by checking off his initial read more frequently, as he has a tendency to lock-on and will force the ball into tight spaces, at times.

"His ability to feel pressure, challenge the defense with his feet and yet still keep his eyes downfield to exploit coverage breakdowns is an exciting combination for the next level. Perhaps most impressive, however, has been his mental and physical maturation since taking over the starting position. McCoy may have entered Texas as a colt, but his improved strength and speed is more reminiscent of a thoroughbred."

AND AN ADDED NOTE:

"Keep an eye on Mississippi's Jevan Snead. He might pass up all these guys."

BIG STATS FOR THE BIG THREE

Sam Bradford, Colt McCoy and Tim Tebow have combined to complete 68.6 percent of their pass attempts, with nearly four times as many touchdowns as interceptions. They have a cumulative passing efficiency rating of 168.52, and have accounted for 303 total touchdowns. Here are their combined numbers:

PASSING					RUSHING		
Comp	Att	Yds	TDs	INTs	Att	Yds	TDs
1,838	2,680	23,963	238	60	866	3,314	65

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Photo by Doug Benc/Getty Images

TIM TEBOW

Q: There's so much speculation about what position you will play at the next level. Given your off-field convictions, will you be OK if you never play in the NFL?

A: "Yeah, I'll be OK. Will I be upset? Obviously, that's my goal. But, no, it's not going to mean my life is over because there are a lot more things that are important to me."

Q: What do you say to critics who say you aren't a classic quarterback, that you face an uphill battle to make it in the NFL?

A: "Maybe if I changed the way I played a little bit, they would look at me a little differently. Maybe if I just threw the ball and didn't run and didn't hit people and didn't get excited, they would look at me a little differently. I just use that as motivation."

Q: In the offseason, the school immortalized your "guarantee" after the Ole Miss game by putting up a plaque. Do you believe your teammates rallied around your comments that they "will never see any player play as hard as I will the rest of the season"?

A: "I think they really respected what I said and my attitude towards it, but even more so than that, my approach the next week and the weeks after that. I think the rest of my team, how they approached it that Sunday we came out, we had a great practice. I think you could really see the team, the momentum change, because of our effort, our enthusiasm, and everything we went out there and we played for."

Q: Between winning the national championship and winning the Heisman and taking mission trips do you feel like your life is perfect?

A: "It's definitely not on cruise control. ... Sometimes my biggest message to other athletes is, yeah, we know you're great in football, but take that greatness, your platform, use it to influence other people. Use it for good. Sometimes it's hard for people to see because football becomes people's worlds. It's everything. ... My passion, even more so than football, is what I can do with the platform that football gives me.

"There's always going to be naysayers, people that are going to say it's fake. That's fine because you can't control everybody. But I can control what I do, my attitude, how I approach the situation."

Photo by John Williamson

SAM BRADFORD

Q: Have the demands on your time changed since you won the Heisman?

A: "It has definitely been enlightening. The guys at the Heisman told me life would never be the same after the award. I wasn't sure how to take that. I now see there is a big change in my life."

Q: You won the Heisman, won the Big 12, played for the national championship and were projected to be the first quarterback taken if you came out. Why did you come back?

A: "I've dreamed about playing at Oklahoma since I was little. I did go back and forth. I really didn't put much thought into it before the national championship game. There were a lot of things I had to comprehend, knowing that if I left I'd be leaving a lot of teammates. Nothing is for certain."

Q: You've said that once you declare for the draft one of the drawbacks is that they start looking for ways to tear you down. Explain?

A: "You've got to be extremely prepared when you enter the draft. No weaknesses, no flaws, nothing they can find a reason not to draft you."

Q: You and Blake Griffin became the second players from the same school to win National Player of the Year awards in the two major sports in the same academic year. Not only that, you played together on the same AAU team. How cool is that?

A: "Blake's a great guy; a great sense of humor. We used to ride to practice together. I don't think either of us would stop laughing the whole time. He was doing impressions of people. He's one of the funniest guys I know. He's not that serious off the court at all."

Photo by John Williamson

COLT MCCOY

Q: You spent a week in the Peruvian jungle for the second consecutive offseason on a Christian mission trip. Word has it that you were able to sprout a beard. True?

A: I guess that's kind of a hot topic isn't it? We didn't shave for about seven days. There weren't any mirrors at all. We had a little bit of running water at night to take a shower and brush our teeth. That was it."

Q: Have you thought about the fact that next year you'll be employed by some NFL team and might not be able to take another mission trip?

A: "I really have not thought that far ahead. I really would like to continue to do this. It really makes you appreciate the things you have."

Q: Do you guys still agonize over losing that Big 12 South tiebreaker to Oklahoma, a team you beat head-to-head?

A: "You have to let that go. It hurt during the season. It's a testament to our team. We did a great job overcoming it. We were able to fight through and win the rest of our games. We felt like we should have had an opportunity to play in that Big 12 game, and if we were fortunate enough to win that, the national championship game. That's motivation for us."

Q: Your brother Case, also a quarterback, committed to Texas in the offseason. Is he better than you?

A: "I'd like to say he is. His teams weren't as successful as mine were, though."

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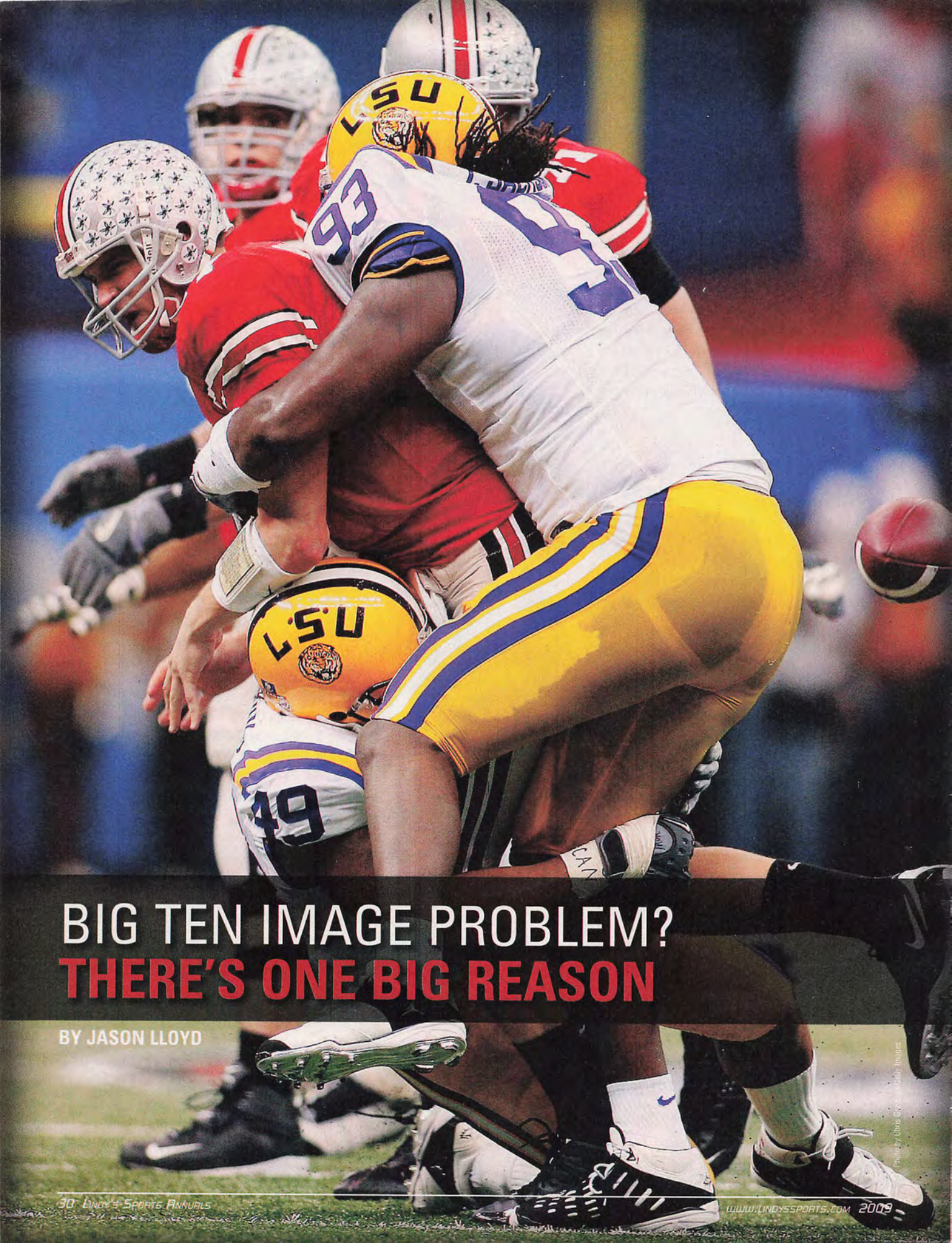

BIG TEN IMAGE PROBLEM? THERE'S ONE BIG REASON

BY JASON LLOYD

Right around the time Ohio State players trudged off the Fiesta Bowl field following another loss last January, the Big Ten's obituary was complete.

What once was arguably the most glorified conference in college football, went 1-6 in bowl games last season, its worst showing in the 104-year history of the league. The Big Ten's bowl record over the past six years is 15-28, and it hasn't won a BCS game since the 2005 season.

Since 2004, Utah — which plays in the Mountain West and isn't even part of the BCS — has just as many BCS victories as the entire Big Ten: Two.

"I think it's fair to look at any five-year period and draw conclusions," Big Ten commissioner Jim Delany said. "The conclusion you would draw is that we've played in a lot of big games and we didn't win many of them."

Kirk Herbstreit played quarterback in the Big Ten and now tours the country on Saturdays as an ESPN analyst. Anytime the GameDay crew ventures outside the Midwest, he gets clobbered by SEC, ACC, Big 12 and Pac-10 fans with shouts of how the Big Ten is overrated.

"They destroy me. They wear me out," Herbstreit said. "I've been doing this a long time. It's never been as bad as it has been the last (few) years."

Herbstreit insists the Big Ten is just as fast at the skill positions as any other conference. The difference comes on the defensive line, where elite teams in the South tend to produce faster linemen than the Midwest.

"When you look at the defensive line and linebackers in the SEC, they're trimmer and faster," Herbstreit said.

"I'm not saying the SEC is fast and the Big Ten is slow. I'm saying the Big Ten can run equal to the SEC when it comes to skill. In the trenches is where I see a noticeable difference."

Jim Tressel has led Ohio State to four consecutive Big Ten championships, but the Buckeyes haven't won a bowl game since 2005. As a result, they bear much of the burden for the Big Ten's tarnished image.

Herbstreit's point about faster defensive linemen was never more evident than in some of Ohio State's biggest losses in recent years.

The Buckeyes were considered to have the most potent offense in the country in 2006, cruising through an unbeaten regular season while facing Big Ten defensive fronts.

In the championship game, though, Florida defensive ends Derrick Harvey and Jarvis Moss whipped Ohio State's offensive line, swarming quarterback Troy Smith for five sacks and holding the Buckeyes to just 82 total yards.

It happened again the following year, when LSU's Tyson Jackson, Glenn Dorsey and Ricky-Jean Francois harassed immobile Ohio State quarterback Todd Boeckman all night, sacking him five times and bringing relentless pressure as the Buckeyes lost a second consecutive national championship game.

Prior to last year's much-anticipated regular-season game against USC, Ohio State's offensive linemen vowed it would be different. Instead, the Trojans again pounded OSU quarterbacks with five more sacks, handcuffing the offense most of the night en route to another one-sided decision.

Like Herbstreit, Minnesota coach Tim Brewster played in the Big Ten. Brewster was a captain on Illinois' 1984 Rose Bowl team and was twice named all-conference as a tight end. Brewster remains an ardent supporter of Big Ten football, insisting the quality of the conference has not diminished.

But even Brewster concedes the defensive linemen — and more specifically defensive tackles — are quicker in the South than anywhere else.

"Defensive tackles are the hardest thing to recruit, period," Brewster said.

"They're the hardest to find in college and the hardest to get in the NFL. And you see an abundance of very talented big, strong, and fast defensive tackles in the SEC and in the South."

Texas, LSU and USC combined to have seven defensive linemen drafted in April. Five were drafted from the entire Big Ten, and only two were tackles: Purdue's Alex Magee (third round) and Michigan's Terrance Taylor (fourth round).

In 2008, only four defensive linemen from the Big Ten were drafted. Wisconsin's Nick Hayden was the only tackle among them, and he didn't go until the sixth round.

Since 2004, 16 defensive tackles have been taken in the first round of the NFL Draft. None has come from the Big Ten. The last Big Ten defensive tackle to be taken in the first round was Penn State's Jimmy Kennedy in 2003.

"Your defense has got to be strong down the middle," Brewster said. "You give me two great defensive tackles and a Mike linebacker, and I'm going to feel good about my team."

Why is it so hard to find good defensive tackles? Start with the fact that coaches must evaluate 17- and 18-year-olds, and project how they would play carrying an additional 40 pounds.

"It's a unique player. It has to be a guy that has great girth, great size, but also has quickness and the ability to separate and go make a play and hold the point of attack," Brewster said.

"It is truly a unique football player today. They're just not readily available. There is not an abundance of 6-2, 325-pound guys walking around. So you have to look at the body structure and the type of bone structure. Does he have the frame to add weight and strength? Then, so much of that has to do with their hands.

"Defensive tackle play is a battle of hands, and so many young high school guys have no clue how to use their hands as a defensive lineman, particularly a defensive tackle."

All of this illustrates an underlying trend throughout college football: Programs in cold weather climates are slipping while warm weather teams are heating up.

As Notre Dame, Michigan and Nebraska have fallen from the elite, Alabama, LSU and Texas Tech have enjoyed a football renaissance. Even previous doormats like Mississippi and Vanderbilt are winning.

There are always exceptions. Despite all the critics, Ohio State has managed to finish in the top 10 six of the past seven years. Mark Mangino has won at frigid Kansas, something that had never been done before, and programs like Boise State have even scored historic victories in remarkable seasons.

By and large, however, the power schools are rising with the temperatures.

Yet, it is much too simple to blame the Big Ten's struggles the past few years solely on some sunshine and defensive linemen.

Had Ohio State stopped Colt McCoy late in last season's Fiesta Bowl and not allowed the game-winning touchdown pass to Quan Cosby in the final seconds, perhaps the Buckeyes — and by extension the Big Ten — would have some relief from all of this.

After all, the Big Ten's image won't start improving until the elite teams like the Buckeyes win big games again.

"Is (criticism) fair? I think it's fair," Tressel said.

"We haven't been successful. Should that paint a picture of our whole conference? I don't think that's fair. But that doesn't matter. What happens in the games is what matters. And we need to win those games."

Photo by Jed Jacobsohn/Getty Images

BOWLED OVER

The Big Ten went 1-6 in the 2008 postseason. Here are the results:

BOWL	RESULT
Champs Sports	L, Florida State 42, Wisconsin 13
Alamo	L, Missouri 30, Northwestern 23
Insight	L, Kansas 42, Minnesota 21
Iowa	W, Iowa 31, South Carolina 10
Capital One	L, Georgia 24, Michigan State 12
Rose	L, USC 38, Penn State 24
Fiesta	L, Texas 24, Ohio State 21

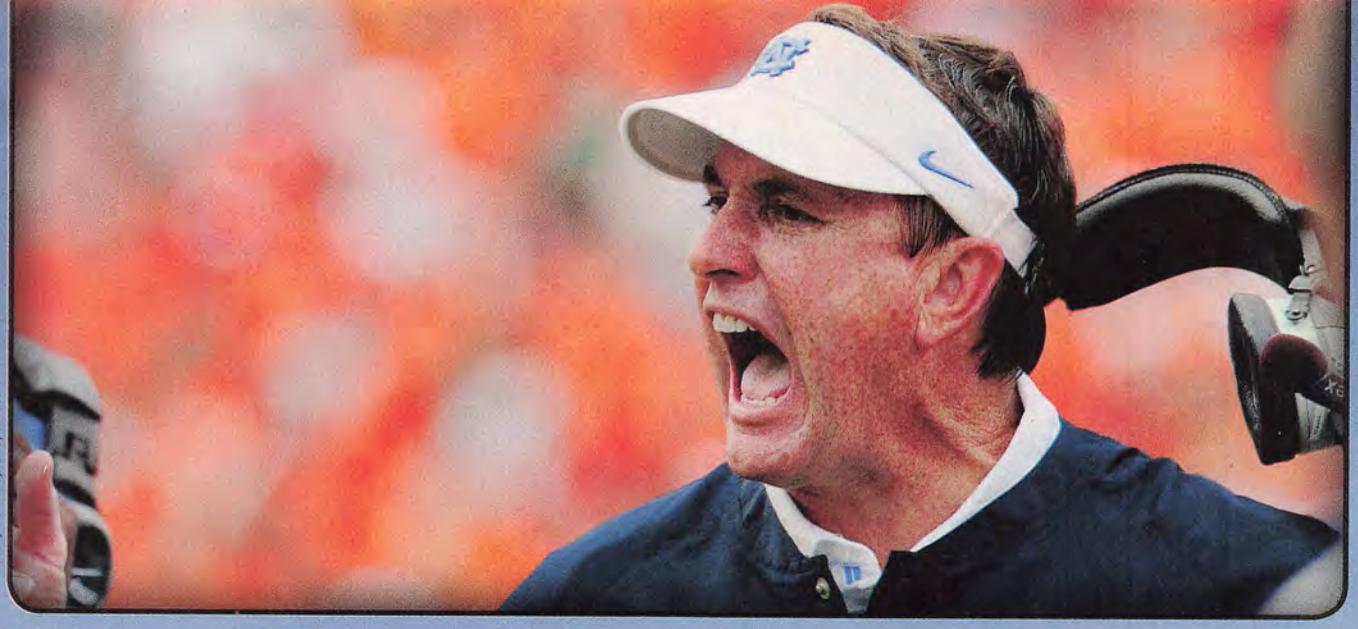

Photo by J.C. Ridley/Cal Sport Media

AVAILABLE: ROOM WITH A VIEW

Vacancy in ACC Penthouse Beckons Carolina

By Eddy Landreth

This was supposed to be the ACC Decade. Unless, that is, you preferred to think in terms of the ACC Century.

Everything was in place: Florida State, the king of the 1990s, was going to get reinforcements by way of the new, football-as-well-as-basketball-rich expanded Atlantic Coast Conference.

Remember, the decade/century started with the ACC champion defeating a future ACC champion for the national championship. That was the Seminoles of Chris Weinke and Peter Warrick beating Virginia Tech and promising freshman Michael Vick in the 2000 Sugar Bowl.

But since then, promises have gone unfilled. Excitement has been missing. BCS bowl games have been lost.

And lost.

And lost.

What has become of the poor ol' ACC?

Now the ACC wistfully wishes it could party like it's 1999.

ACC teams had lost eight consecutive BCS bowl games until Virginia Tech managed a victory over Big East champion (yawn) Cincinnati last season in the Orange Bowl. Chances are you did not watch ... yes, even the successes have been understated: TV ratings (and interest in the game) were by far the worst of the BCS bowls.

This is all a way of saying that since ACC expansion in 2004 and 2005 — when the league bulked up to 12 teams, forming a supposed superconference with Florida State and Miami as twin powers — there has been a big void at the top.

Nothing against Virginia Tech. Beamer Ball has been the class of the league.

But the Hokies, with four losses last season — including a season-opening debacle against East Carolina — ended up as the highest-ranked ACC team ... at a mere No. 15 in the AP poll.

The year before, the three-loss Hokies were No. 9. In 2006, the ACC's highest-ranked team — Wake Forest — climbed all the way to No. 18 in the final poll.

Not since 2005, when Virginia Tech was 8-0, has an ACC team gotten a whiff of national championship fever.

No FSU. No Miami.

When this grand ACC plan was hatched, the Seminoles and Hurricanes just had to be split up — FSU to the Atlantic and Miami to the Coastal — in order to maintain balance and to set up a colossal clash in the ACC title game.

Those two teams, after all, had accounted for seven national championships in the preceding 17 seasons. And then there was Georgia Tech, Virginia, North Carolina and Clemson, each of which had resided in the top five in the country at some point in the 1990s. That means, entering this decade, more than half the teams in the league had reason to believe they could compete at the highest level.

No other conference could claim such distinction.

Whatever.

Miami collapsed. Florida State is treading water.

Two years ago, Wake Forest won the ACC title game. Wake Forest. It's not like you see Vanderbilt winning the SEC. Or Indiana winning the Big Ten. Or Baylor winning the Big 12.

For the past two seasons, expansion brothers Virginia Tech and Boston College have played for the ACC championship. Last year's titillating matchup drew a generous estimation of not quite 54,000 people at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, Fla.

The ACC has been like the Big Ten ... without Ohio State.

The ACC has been like the Pac-10 ... without USC.

Bleh.

OK, though, what's next? Who's going to fill that void at the top?

Well, Virginia Tech is the easy answer. The Hokies are once again the favorite to win the conference championship. They never have quite left the national scene, even if they haven't reached the heights of the Michael Vick era. Watch out if they beat Alabama in the season-opener.

Florida State is young but getting bet-

ter, and might have once again found the right dadgum combination of quarterback and offensive line.

"This spring we were pretty fortunate that we did not have an overabundance of injuries, which can ruin a spring practice," coach Bobby Bowden said.

Miami is even younger, and sees brighter days through big recruiting efforts from Randy Shannon.

Georgia Tech gave teams fits last season with Paul Johnson's triple-option attack, winning big in his first season in Atlanta.

On the other hand . . .

The Virginia Tech program might be all about Frank Beamer, who isn't getting any younger. Bowden certainly isn't getting any younger. Miami has been nothing but a .500 program for three years. And can the Yellow Jackets really win big all the time with that tricked-up offense?

The ACC program that could be best-suited, long-term, to battle for national recognition, honors and championships is ... North Carolina.

Coach Butch Davis has been building this thing for the past two seasons after Carl Torbush and John Bunting squandered the program's momentum from the late 1990s.

With Davis, the Tar Heels are swiftly restocking their talent pool and are approaching the gifted teams that marked the end of Mack Brown's run in Chapel Hill.

"We've tried to really emphasize through our recruiting efforts and our strength and conditioning effort to enhance the speed of our football team," Davis said. "College football is a game of speed."

Two years ago, the Tar Heels struggled just to put enough players on the field, lacking useful backups at several key positions.

In 2008, Carolina won eight games despite losing their biggest playmakers in wide receiver/kick returner Brandon Tate and quarterback T.J. Yates, who broke his ankle against Virginia Tech early in the year and missed much of the season.

"In 2007, we were paper thin," Davis said.

"We were one injury away at every single position from playing someone who wasn't ready to play or didn't have the ability to play. Last year, we had depth at some positions, but certainly not a lot of them, and we faced some adversity."

Davis, the head coach at Miami from 1995 to 2000, didn't stay around to see the fruits of his labors with the Hurricanes, leaving behind a pro-stocked program when he bolted for the Cleveland Browns.

The 2001 'Canes, considered by *Lindy's* to be the best team of the decade, was embarrassingly rich with the kind of pros that maybe, possibly, in some kind of way Davis is beginning to compile in Chapel Hill.

"He did a great job at the University of Miami," Bowden said. "When he came there they were on probation, and he had a job to do. He had a lot of building to do, and of course, expectations down there are so great. He did exactly what a great coach will do: He brought them from here to there.

"About the time he left, you didn't want to play them anymore."

> The Heels are coming. If they don't fully announce their presence this season, just wait until next year.

Davis's first two years at North Carolina was Kiddie Corps time. The junior and senior classes were largely empty of bodies and talent. Now, those young guys are maturing. The defensive front might all eventually play in the NFL.

"I don't think North Carolina or anybody else could hire a coach better than Butch Davis," Bowden said. "You can tell by his recruiting. And I thought the way they played last year was an indication."

The Heels are coming. If they don't fully announce their presence this season, just wait until next year.

"We're not to the point where we have the depth, where the second- and third-team guys are every bit as good as the starters," Davis said. "Hopefully, we'll continue to recruit good kids and get there someday."

The ACC is hoping the same thing.

That one of its teams will get there again.

ACC IN BCS BOWLS

The ACC has won only two of 11 BCS bowl games, and has never sent a second team to the top games as an at-large team.

SEASON	BOWL	RESULT
1998	Fiesta	L, Tennessee 23, Florida State 16
1999	Sugar	W, Florida State 46, Virginia Tech 29*
2000	Orange	L, Oklahoma 13, Florida State 2
2001	Orange	L, Florida 56, Maryland 23
2002	Sugar	L, Georgia 26, Florida State 13
2003	Orange	L, Miami 16, Florida State 14*
2004	Sugar	L, Auburn 16, Virginia Tech 13
2005	Orange	L, Penn State 26, Florida State 23 (3OT)
2006	Orange	L, Louisville 24, Wake Forest 13
2007	Orange	L, Kansas 24, Virginia Tech 21
2008	Orange	W, Virginia Tech 20, Cincinnati 7

**Virginia Tech and Miami were still in the Big East*

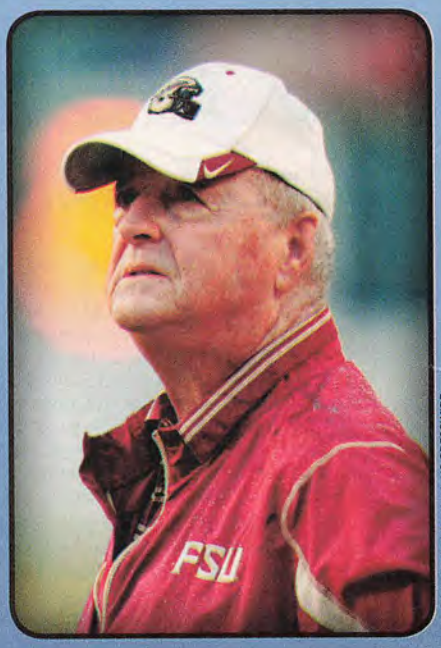

Photo by Joel Auerbach-US PRESSWIRE

NATIONAL PICKS

14 Opponents in Search of KRYPTONITE

Photo by Jerry Laizure-US PRESSWIRE

1. FLORIDA

This one is easy. Some years, you flip a coin for No. 1. This year, we flipped a coin for No. 2. Well, not really, but it was that kind of close.

It wasn't close at No. 1. You didn't have to be Lee Corso to see this one coming. This one was decided the moment quarterback Tim Tebow declared he was coming back for his senior season. We expect that for 14 more games — from Sept. 5 against Charleston Southern to the BCS title game on Jan. 7 — we won't see any player in the entire country play as hard as Tebow, and that we won't see a team play harder than the Gators.

Florida No. 1? Sounds like a promise.

THE GOOD NEWS: Florida has 20 returning starters from a national championship team. You know the Gators. You know they're good. They score. They stop people. They'll blow kisses to new Tennessee coach Lane Kiffin, and then continue to chomp on everyone's throats.

But talent is only one (very) important part of the equation.

You can't ignore scheduling factors in the national championship race. And while you never want to call a walk through the SEC a breeze, the Gators don't play cross-division games against Alabama or Ole Miss. That's a break. State rival Florida State — not much of a rival lately, actually — plays in Gainesville. This schedule is just so dang do-able.

THE BAD NEWS: About that schedule, Florida does have to play at West Division power LSU on Oct. 10, but at least the Gators have two weeks to prepare while the Tigers are at Georgia a week earlier. See what we mean about the favorable schedule?

The short list of key personnel losses includes both offensive tackles and do-it-all Percy Harvin. That's not to be taken lightly. Can freshman Andre Debose be the next Harvin? Right now, the receivers aren't a scary bunch.

OUR CALL: The Gators have the stuff to be one of the best teams of the decade, and the Tim Tebow era could end with him resting at the top of college football's most hallowed pinnacle.

2. TEXAS

One Play Better than Last Year

The Longhorns won't need no stinkin' asterisk. They tried that this spring, sneaking an asterisk onto a display in their football facility that signified the 2008 Big 12 champions. Not quite, fellas. Yeah, the Horns ended up on the pointy end of that three-way South tiebreaker, but, like it or not, it was the Texas-beaten Oklahoma Sooners who went on to play for the flashy rings. UT should be able to make just one more play this season and share the championship with no one.

THE GOOD NEWS: How to separate Texas from Oklahoma? The offensive line. The Longhorns are big and experienced, led by tackle Adam Ulatoski. Wide receiver Jordan Shipley does nothing but get open for 77 percent passer Colt McCoy, who might just take his turn collecting a Heisman Trophy.

THE BAD NEWS: There will be a drop-off on the defensive line, which helped the Longhorns lead the nation with 47 sacks last season and eliminate rushing attacks. Star outside linebacker Sergio Kindle slides down to an end position to help. If McCoy gets hurt, all bets are off.

OUR CALL: It's going to come down to the game in Dallas against Oklahoma and the trip to Oklahoma State, but this season looks like the Longhorns' time on the dance floor.

3. OKLAHOMA

Another Run at Almost No. 1

The Sooners are the flip side to Texas, with their experience up front coming on the defensive side of the ball. So which do you prefer ... big blockers or big run-stuffers? OU coach Bob Stoops began the spring by calling out his rebuilt offensive line, taking a dig at his rival by saying those players who failed daily in winter conditioning were given a grade of "Texas" — less than zero. Nice. Unless those four new starters come together, it will be the Longhorns laughing last.

THE GOOD NEWS: There's Heisman-winning quarterback Sam Bradford, a pair of 1,000-yard running backs and *Lindy's* preseason All-American tight end Jermaine Gresham. The defensive front seven, led by DT Gerald McCoy, is talented and deep.

THE BAD NEWS: Bradford's protection last season was Secret Service good, but he might have to get his uniform dirty this season. The Sooners, for as good as they were and are on defense, need to ratchet things down, having allowed too many big plays last season.

OUR CALL: It wouldn't be shocking to see the Sooners back in the national championship game, but it's time for them to come away with something more than a participant ribbon in BCS games.

4. USC

A Record Fifth Straight Rose Bowl?

The Trojans have finished in the AP top four in seven consecutive seasons — a 1990s-era Florida State kind of streak — so why is there still a sense of unfilled promise? It seems as if USC fans lately have been on their tiptoes waiting for a kiss that never comes. A pesky play or two in each of the past three years has prevented the national-championship-worthy Trojans from playing in the final game of the season. Expectations are only slightly lower this season.

THE GOOD NEWS: The Trojans haven't had severe hiccups from quarterback changes, and presumed new guy Aaron Corp will be protected by a talented, veteran line. Pete Carroll's national-best recruiting ensures that the beat goes on, and the return of FS Taylor Mays was huge.

THE BAD NEWS: The talent drain was such that the Trojans lost 11 players to the NFL Draft, which tied for the second-most ever from one school in a seven-round draft. There are lots of new faces in the defensive front, including an all-new starting group of linebackers.

OUR CALL: Carroll ought to be grand marshal of the big parade as often as he's involved in the Tournament of Roses. Looks like his Trojans will be back in Pasadena for a fifth consecutive season — something nobody has ever done.

5. VIRGINIA TECH

Winning formula spells B-C-S again

Last year's ACC titlist was supposed to be a rebuilding season of Beamer Ball, but the Hokies won't sneak up on anyone in the ACC this season, not with 17 starters back from their Orange Bowl roster. The player drawing the most attention in the offseason was run-first QB Tyrod Taylor, who tweaked his mechanics to develop a smoother release and earn the plaudits of observers for his touch and accuracy ... at least on the short throws.

THE GOOD NEWS: The Hokies should be able to run against most anyone, with Taylor chipping in when a deep stable of tailbacks falters. The offensive line rates as one of the best in the ACC and both starting wide receivers are holdovers from '08.

THE BAD NEWS: The defense is seeping with potential, but will inexperience doom this group? Both inside 'backers' and cornerbacks are new faces. The kicking game has questions and PK Matt Waldron is untested as a fifth-year senior.

OUR CALL: There's no perfect team in the ACC, leading us to lean on Virginia Tech's 17 returnees and back-to-back conference titles. And if Taylor helps them to a fast start in a Sept. 5 game vs. Alabama ... anything is possible.

6. LSU

Another Shot at Florida in Atlanta?

The Tigers served notice with a 38-3 bowl deconstruction of Georgia Tech last season, and now they will be counting on bigger and better things from sophomore quarterback Jordan Jefferson. He took over late last year and could provide the full-season oomph LSU needs to climb past Alabama in the SEC West. SEC veteran John Chavis, the former Tennessee defensive coordinator, takes over the defense, which has a terrific back seven.

THE GOOD NEWS: Jefferson is the new piece to an offense that should fly with the SEC's best group of running backs (headlined by Charles Scott) and best group of pass catchers (led by Brandon LaFell). *Lindy's* preseason All-American offensive lineman Ciron Black helps make it go.

THE BAD NEWS: LSU lost three starting defensive linemen, although when the new starters include seniors Al Woods and Rahim Alem, the news isn't all bad. LSU has to play Florida in the regular season; West contenders Alabama and Ole Miss do not.

OUR CALL: The talented Tigers bounce back from a 3-5 conference record, but even with a potential two cracks at Florida, they will have to settle for being the SEC's second best.

7. ALABAMA

Ahead of Schedule ... What's Next?

Some of Alabama's early victories last season were considered upsets, as Nick Saban brought back the glory days in just his second season. Arriving ahead of schedule, though, now means that nothing he (or they) does now will be a surprise. Tide fans are naming newborn boys "Saban" and expecting 12-0 regular seasons every year. Doing that will be harder without an experienced QB, but this edition is all about defense anyway.

THE GOOD NEWS: Alabama brings back nine starters from the nation's third-rated defense, with backups in the front seven who might have more raw ability than the starters. With WR Julio Jones and RB Mark Ingram, the Tide's skill positions are among the best in the SEC.

THE BAD NEWS: The offensive line lost three starters, including first-round tackle Andre Smith and center Antoine Caldwell. RB Glen Coffee also is gone. New QB Greg McElroy should be fine, but the offense really will turn vanilla if he isn't able to stay healthy.

OUR CALL: Having the nation's highest-paid coach is worth every penny. Saban has things rolling and will continue to do so with at least Top 10 finishes as far as the eye can see.

8. OHIO STATE

Pryor Judgment: Bucks Still Big Ten's Best

The present and future of the program is in the trusted hands of sophomore Terrelle Pryor. The comparisons to Vince Young are legit, and the fan base is clearly buying in (95,722 strong for the spring game?). Why not? The Big Ten hardly seems a murderer's row and Jim Tressel reloads on the run most every year, making the challenge of replacing several stars less daunting.

THE GOOD NEWS: Pryor proved in the spring game, albeit in a controlled environment, that he has passing prowess. He can scoot when pressured, but opposing coaches will sweat bullets if he can also stretch the field consistently with his throwing arm. The offense has no shortage of options at receiver.

THE BAD NEWS: The Buckeyes sent seven players to the NFL Draft, including super LB James Laurinaitis. The offensive line is a work in progress entering the fall — notably at left tackle — and there are several spots up for grabs on a defense that won't be as polished or deep as in 2008.

OUR CALL: The Big Ten still belongs to the Buckeyes, even if it means winning November road games at Happy Valley and Ann Arbor to seal no worse than a share of first place — and another BCS bid — for the fifth straight season.

9. OLE MISS

Did Somebody Say Skyrocketing Expectations?

The Rebels were winless in the SEC in 2007. In 2008, they upset Florida, won five SEC games, finished on a six-game winning streak and put the hammer down on Texas Tech in the Cotton Bowl. That tells us two things: Former coach Ed Orgeron could really recruit and Houston Nutt can really coach. With Nutt now in his second season, the expectations are the highest they've been in Oxford since ... well, since a very long time. Not even the Eli Manning teams generated this kind of preseason buzz.

THE GOOD NEWS: In the Rebs' six-game winning streak, QB Jevan Snead threw for 16 touchdowns, with only three interceptions, and more of the same is anticipated. He's helped by a fine collection of running backs and receivers — and Dexter McCluster is a bit of both. Defensive end Greg Hardy can dominate.

THE BAD NEWS: Offensive lineman Michael Oher and defensive tackle Peria Jerry were back-to-back picks, Nos. 23 and 24, in the NFL Draft. That's a hard-to-replace 600 pounds. The secondary needs to show improvement.

OUR CALL: Even if the Rebels, with 16 returning starters, fall short of their first-ever SEC championship game, they are ready to make the move to a season with double-digit victories.

10. OKLAHOMA STATE

Cowboys Ready for More Shootouts

If you like bright, shiny objects, Oklahoma State is your team this season. The Cowboys are all flash — they have an incredible mix of talent and potential at every level of offense — but the nagging question is about substance. And by substance we mean defense. And we mean that Oklahoma State doesn't play a whole bunch of that. The Cowboys haven't been better than 74th nationally in total defense sine the 2001 season. Veteran D-coordinator Bill Young was brought in to fix it.

THE GOOD NEWS: Take any team's top quarterback, running back, receiver and offensive lineman. Are they better than (Zac Robinson, Kendall Hunter, Dez Bryant and tackle Russell Okung?) Don't think too hard: The answer is no.

THE BAD NEWS: The Cowboys lost to the four best teams it played last season. They scored 41 against Oklahoma ... and lost by nearly three touchdowns. OSU has trouble rushing the QB and defending the pass — a poisonous combination against those high-powered Big 12 attacks.

OUR CALL: The 'Boys are one of the biggest risk-rewards projections in the country. That defense makes it hard to trust they'll be able to forge a three-way tie in the South.

11. PENN STATE

JoePa has Lions Positioned for Pasadena

Ten wins a season has (again) become automatic for 83-year-old Joe Paterno. Penn State has 40 victories in the past four seasons and the Lions have the all-star candidates at critical positions — QB Daryll Clark, DT Jared Odrick and LB Sean Lee — to mop up in the non-conference season and scoot happily through the Big Ten before hosting Ohio State in November.

THE GOOD NEWS: Clark is in the running as the top QB in the league, and the Nittany Lions' defensive quarterback — Lee — was most of the way back this spring from an ACL tear suffered prior to last season. With Lee and troubled LB Navorro Bowman expected to be on the field in September, the defense should take no more than a baby step backward.

THE BAD NEWS: Three multi-year starters at wide receiver — Derrick Williams, Deon Butler and Jordan Norwood — are gone. Arguably the top two O-linemen from last year's group, including workaholic A.Q. Shipley in the pivot, have been replaced.

OUR CALL: Penn State faces a low degree of difficulty before carving into what appears to be a soft underbelly of the Big Ten. Then it's beat the Buckeyes (not the simplest task) and pack for Pasadena.

12. CALIFORNIA

A Real Chance to Sack Troy?

Cal's 51-year Rose Bowl drought might have been over by now, if not for a certain Pac-10 power in Los Angeles. The Bears, so good since coach Jeff Tedford took over in 2002, would have won the league title in 2004 and 2006 ... if they had only found a way to beat USC. A good chance to do so comes around again this season: The Trojans have some reloading to do; this year's meeting is in Berkeley, and Cal has significant game-changers on both sides of the ball.

THE GOOD NEWS: Nobody accelerates faster and is better in the open field than junior RB Jahvid Best, who had seven rushes of at least 60 yards last season. The lines are strong and experienced. Senior cornerback Syd'Quan Thompson leads a secondary that rivals USC's.

THE BAD NEWS: Tedford has lost his magic touch with quarterbacks. Kevin Riley was the starter for most of last season, but his job is not secure heading into fall. The receiving corps has to mature and improve. TE Cameron Morrah would have helped; he left early to be a seventh-rounder.

OUR CALL: With 15 starters back from a nine-win team, the Bears can push USC for the Pac-10 championship. It's just that the Trojans always push back harder.

13. BOISE STATE

Another Big Score for the Mid-Majors

Boise State has averaged nearly 11 victories a season over the past 10 years. Why stop now? The Broncos came within a point of their second undefeated season in three years, falling 17-16 to TCU in the 2008 Poinsettia Bowl. They didn't show it against TCU's tough defense, but the Broncos averaged 49 points in their final five regular-season games ... and there will be a lot more of that this season with quarterback Kellen Moore, only a sophomore, back to lead the attack.

THE GOOD NEWS: Moore has playmakers on the outside with receivers Austin Pettis and Titus Young. The defense has only five returning starters, but a talent bridge is in place and even with a step back, the Broncos will still outscore just about everybody they play.

THE BAD NEWS: The offensive line was a constant shuffle last season — with 11 different starting combinations — and continuity there is a primary concern. The Broncos have only one returning starter among the defensive front seven.

OUR CALL: We'll be talking about Boise State being BCS-bound if it beats visiting Oregon in the home opener. Nobody in the WAC is going to touch the Broncos.

14. TCU

Here Comes MWC: Underrated No More

Why are the numbers 2, 14, 16, 11 and 4 significant here? Those are the final AP rankings of the best Mountain West team in the past five years, starting with last season's unbeaten Utah team. The point is, none of those MWC squads started that high in the preseason, and they're always underrated. That's the lesson we take here. It might not feel like the MWC's best team should be ahead of some bigger-conference schools, but that's the way it will end up ... isn't that right, Alabama?

THE GOOD NEWS: All-American DE Jerry Hughes is back after recording 15 sacks and forcing six fumbles. QB Andy Dalton is experienced and efficient. The defense hasn't allowed more than 18.7 points or 330 yards per game in each of the past four seasons.

THE BAD NEWS: TCU, which is 2-2 against ranked BCS-conference teams in the past four seasons, will get early prove-it games, opening at Virginia and playing at Clemson in week three. A game at BYU will be a significant league test, but the Frogs get Utah at home.

OUR CALL: Don't worry about TCU having only four returning starters on defense. The Frogs don't take a break on that side of the ball and will win the MWC for the first time since 2005.

15. OREGON

New Coach, New Players, Same Success

Coach Mike Bellotti is no longer on the sideline, but the Ducks prepared for his move into administration. Offensive coordinator and former coach-in-waiting Chip Kelly will do the dirty football work now, elevated before spring practice when Bellotti hung up his whistle. Kelly's read-option offense is why he has this job, and the Ducks have the right quarterback — Jeremiah Masoli — to produce a third consecutive top 10 finish in total offense.

THE GOOD NEWS: The silver lining to multiple injuries at quarterback last season was that Oregon had to turn to Masoli, a fiery dual-threat junior college transfer who ran for 718 yards and 10 TDs. Autzen Stadium will be rockin' for home league games against Cal and USC.

THE BAD NEWS: The Ducks suffered more key personnel losses than fellow league contender Cal, tying a school record by having six players drafted, including a trio of second-rounders. Oregon returns a conference-low 10 starters. How 'bout that season-opener at Boise State?

OUR CALL: The coaching shuffle seems to have been painless, and the Pac-10 is no great shakes this season ... so getting to eight or nine wins in the regular season is a bar the Ducks can clear.

16. GEORGIA TECH

Option Leads the Way Back to the Future

Georgia Tech advanced its program by hiring a coach with an offensive style that most big-college play-callers boxed, sealed and shelved along with bellbottom jeans and Chuck Taylor sneakers. Paul Johnson's triple-option was one of the most interesting college football angles of 2008, and it was even more of an instant hit than anyone anticipated. Does he have another 10-win season up his sleeve? Can he beat Georgia again?

THE GOOD NEWS: The Yellow Jackets have 17 starters back, including defending ACC Offensive Player of the Year Jonathan Dwyer at tailback and QB Josh Nesbitt. The Jackets would feel comfortable starting four different runners in a lead back role.

THE BAD NEWS: The defensive front four, an underrated component to the team's success last season, is three-fourths new and Nesbitt had a balky shoulder at the end of April ... although, we acknowledge, that's not the worst of ailments when he does more toss-pitching than passing.

OUR CALL: Offensive playmakers make this an exciting choice to overtake Virginia Tech, but will the defense be hot enough to sizzle? The Jackets are an ingredient or three away from college football's elite.

17. GEORGIA

Superstars are Gone, but Dawgs Aren't

Georgia was our preseason No. 1 last season — at least we had some company in being wrong — when the Dawgs, according to one SEC coach speaking to *Lindy's* on condition of confidentiality, might have been "kind of soft. They never knocked you off the ball or blocked that well." Now he tells us. Anyway, Georgia still had a very nice 10-3 season and coach Mark Richt has yet to finish out of the Top 25 in his eight seasons, with five Top 10 appearances.

THE GOOD NEWS: Georgia's offensive line should be ready to push the pile with a now-experienced group, led by tackle/guard Clint Boling. WR A.J. Green is a star. The interior D-line is strong with Geno Atkins and Jeff Owens. QB Joe Cox at least has some experience and should be accurate.

THE BAD NEWS: The offense just won't be the same without Matthew Stafford, Knowshon Moreno and Mohamed Massaquoi. An ambitious schedule includes an opener at Oklahoma State. The Dawgs are searching for a pass rush and renewed fire in their belly.

OUR CALL: The "wow" factor is gone, but eight or nine victories in the regular season seems reasonable for a stable program that never takes an off year in recruiting.

18. FLORIDA STATE

Can Ponder pass ACC tests?

Florida State has its quarterback — Christian Ponder — and a defense that harkens back to the glory days of the program. Ponder still looked like a better athlete than passer in the spring. He and the 'Noles start the season with a big test, renewing the rivalry with Miami, and they have visits to BYU, North Carolina and Florida. If Ponder proves he's as good as his best days, there are better ones ahead for FSU, which will play into January.

THE GOOD NEWS: For a team that wants to run the ball, the stabilized offensive line is a major boon, but everything will revolve around Ponder. The defense, led by LB Dekoda Watson and CB Patrick Robinson, looks to be up to program standards again.

THE BAD NEWS: The offense turned the ball over eight times in the spring game. Hooray for the defense, thumbs way down for Ponder's posse. Efficiency and consistency have been lacking on that side of the ball, and moments of brilliance and flashes of greatness won't be enough. Special teams are a glaring concern, too.

OUR CALL: The 'Noles have many unknowns, but, to repeat, this is about Ponder. If he's not up to the task, another middle-of-the-pack season could prompt Bobby Bowden into retirement.

19. NORTH CAROLINA

Tar Heel Breakthrough this Season? Or Next?

Coach Butch Davis has built an ACC contender. Can the Tar Heels be anything more? They just might, because nobody else is taking the league by the throat. First things first, and that means moving from eight wins last season to double-digits, which would probably mean Orange Bowl. That could happen behind a defense that returns nine starters, with a defensive line that collectively could be special.

THE GOOD NEWS: UNC should be fine at quarterback with T.J. Yates and capable backups. Whether Yates can strike up a connection with WR Dwight Jones (last year's gem recruit) and freshman Josh Adams will be a big factor. If the tailbacks are right, this backfield could be bountiful.

THE BAD NEWS: The Tar Heels are lacking a proven gamebreaker on offense and the receiving corps looks particularly light in that stud receivers Hakeem Nicks and Brandon Tate must be capably replaced. Yates is injury prone (see: thumb injury catching a Frisbee in the spring).

OUR CALL: Seeing is believing with the Tar Heels, who had a decent 8-5 season in 2008, but didn't do it with style points. If not this season, though, maybe next for Davis.

20. WEST VIRGINIA

Still Contenders Even without White

Even the most optimistic Mountaineers fans don't expect Jarrett Brown to be Pat White. That's a good thing, since Brown won't waste his time trying to replace White. He's a different player and one who should give the team more in the passing game. There was football in Morgantown after Rich Rodriguez and Steve Slaton, and there will be football without White. Getting back suspended wide receiver Jock Sanders with two good tailbacks will help ease Brown into the starting gig.

THE GOOD NEWS: Brown won both of his previous starts and has been described as unflappable. LB Reed Williams, WVU's leading tackler in 2007, returns from a medical redshirt. Slippery quick running back Noel Devine could emerge as a darkhorse Heisman candidate.

THE BAD NEWS: The team blitzes more than the average defense, but has only an average secondary. Kick coverage crippled the team at times last season. Road games include Auburn, USF, Cincinnati and Rutgers.

OUR CALL: The decent Big East might surprise, but we're expecting the Mountaineers to stand taller than the rest ... just as long as Brown, who has never been "the man," doesn't go down.

21. KANSAS

Zeroing in on Big 12 North

The Jayhawks failed to outlast a meat-grinder schedule in 2008, falling to 8-5 one season removed from an Orange Bowl bid. But KU did win a second consecutive bowl game and has all the principles in place to take the steady-but-not-special North division. Winning crossover games with Oklahoma, Texas and Texas Tech won't be mandatory. Taking one or more (even just one) might make folks start taking notice, as they did in 2007.

THE GOOD NEWS: QB Todd Reesing — he of the eight 300-yard passing games in '08 — survived last season, when too often it appeared he was playing without an offensive line. His top two receivers are back, as is the Jayhawks' leading rusher.

THE BAD NEWS: There's not a lot to like on the other side of the ball. Kansas decided the best way to repair a defense that allowed four touchdowns per game was to try a "nickel" defense more often. The team's run defense, like the kick-coverage teams, has to be much better.

OUR CALL: Kansas can score, which means it can stand up to any team in the Big 12 North. Successfully navigating the rest of the schedule is predicated on the defense showing up even a little.

22. NEBRASKA

Zeroing in on Big 12 North, too

Bo Pelini is 1-0 in 2009. Taking the team to a New Year's Day victory in the Gator Bowl was measured progress over a 5-7 record under Bill Callahan in 2007. It's still time to proceed cautiously with talk of a revival. Remember, the Huskers have played in one Big 12 Championship in 10 years (2006). Hosting Oklahoma in November could be considered an opportunity, but Nebraska was manhandled by the Sooners last season.

THE GOOD NEWS: Nose guard Ndamukong Suh can collapse an offensive line, giving Nebraska one of the top defensive linemen in the country and an anchor for a young defense. RB Roy Helu (three 100-yard games, five TDs in final four) added muscle to hold up to a healthy pounding.

THE BAD NEWS: Joe Ganz no longer takes the snaps at quarterback, and the Cornhuskers are hoping junior Zac Lee, who has speed and a good throwing arm, avoids major growing pains. Pelini might not remain perfect this calendar year with games at Virginia Tech and Missouri out of the gate.

OUR CALL: Winning the North is possible, but it might be another year before the Huskers are Nebraska again.

23. UTAH

Long Way to Fall ... but Utes Will Hang On

Utah did all it could last season and then had to rely on the kindness of pollsters, who were compelled to only go so far, putting the nation's only undefeated team at No. 2. Nobody is expecting perfection again. The last time the Utes were here, coming out for an encore after an unbeaten season, they ended up just 7-5 in 2005. This time the fall won't be as precipitous. Even with a mere 11 returning starters, consider this season a tune-up rather than a rebuild.

THE GOOD NEWS: Athletic outside linebacker Stevenson Sylvester is back to lead the defense. The offensive line and a power running game can keep the offense afloat while the Utes break in a new quarterback. Coach Kyle Whittingham has won 72 percent of his games in four years.

THE BAD NEWS: The Utes lost both coordinators but hope promotions make for an easy transition. The best offensive player (QB Brian Johnson) and defensive player (DE Paul Kruger) are gone. Nation's best combo kicker, Louie Sakoda, will be deeply missed.

OUR CALL: Utah isn't BCS-caliber. But the Utes are capable of stealing one of their tough road games — Oregon, TCU and BYU — and staying nationally relevant.

24. MICHIGAN STATE

Not Elite, but Ahead of Big Ten Pack

Michigan State went all the way to last season's final weekend with a share of the Big Ten title at stake. Yeah, the Spartans came up woefully short against Penn State, as they had earlier in the season against Ohio State, which further emphasized the chasm between the league leaders and the big belly of the Big Ten. Sparty might not be ready to win the conference, but its defense will keep it one step ahead of the bloated pack.

THE GOOD NEWS: Michigan State returns eight starters to what could be coach Mark Dantonio's best defense in his three years. MLB Greg Jones is a beast. There's no Ohio State on the schedule, and the Penn State matchup to end the season is in East Lansing.

THE BAD NEWS: Javon Ringer rushed a national-high 390 times last season, but he's now with the Tennessee Titans, so the offense has to find a new security blanket. The QB situation is TBA (Kirk Cousins or Keith Nichol), and last year's young WRs need to play like savvy veterans.

OUR CALL: Like last season, if the Spartans just beat the teams they should beat, they're looking at nine wins. Michigan State will need an upset for some gravy.

25. BYU

Ticketed for Maximum Ride

BYU is playing it a little cooler this season. No "Quest for Perfection" slogans on T-shirts. That didn't work out last season, and humble is a good way to be when you're staring at a season-opener against Oklahoma in Arlington, Texas. Picking the Cougars in the Top 25 might not look so good after the Sooners get done with them, but it should be business as usual for a program that has lost only two Mountain West Conference games in three seasons.

THE GOOD NEWS: Most of the offensive skill is back — efficient QB Max Hall, TE Dennis Pitta and RB Harvey Unga, as difficult to tackle as a cannon ball. Defensive standout Jan Jorgensen (24 career sacks) is back at one of the end spots.

THE BAD NEWS: BYU was a cumulative 49 points worse than TCU and Utah last season. WR Austin Collie caught everything Hall threw, but he's off to the NFL. Four straight years in the Las Vegas Bowl? That's nice, but the Cougs wouldn't mind a different destination.

OUR CALL: BYU has home games against Florida State, TCU and Utah. No way the Cougars lose all of them. One or two upsets will keep them straddling the Top 25 cut line.

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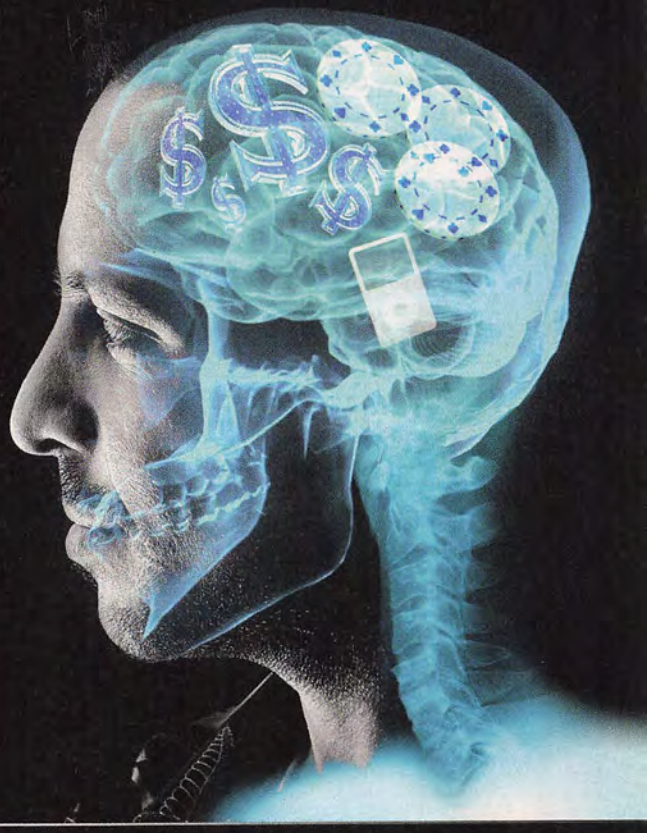

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RATING THE TEAMS 1-120

1. Florida	SEC	1	6. LSU	SEC	2	11. Penn State	Big Ten	2	16. Georgia Tech	ACC	2	21. Kansas	Big 12	4
2. Texas	Big 12	1	7. Alabama	SEC	3	12. California	Pac-10	2	17. Georgia	SEC	5	22. Nebraska	Big 12	5
3. Oklahoma	Big 12	2	8. Ohio State	Big Ten	1	13. Boise State	WAC	1	18. Florida State	ACC	3	23. Utah	MWC	2
4. USC	Pac-10	1	9. Ole Miss	SEC	4	14. TCU	MWC	1	19. North Carolina	ACC	4	24. Michigan State	Big Ten	3
5. Virginia Tech	ACC	1	10. Oklahoma State	Big 12	3	15. Oregon	Pac-10	3	20. West Virginia	Big East	1	25. BYU	MWC	3

No.	Team	Conf.	Conf. Rank	
26.	Texas Tech	Big 12	6	The beat will go on at QB. Replace Michael Crabtree? Shut up.
27.	Illinois	Big Ten	4	Final fling for combo of QB Juice Williams, WR Arrelious Benn.
28.	Tennessee	SEC	6	Shaky QB play might humble new coach Lane Kiffin in Year One.
29.	Wisconsin	Big Ten	5	Schedule, favorable and easy, could lead to feel-good victory total.
30.	Wake Forest	ACC	5	Four-year starting QB Riley Skinner gives Deacons a chance.
31.	Oregon State	Pac-10	4	Rodgers brothers keep OSU ahead of Pac-10's thick middle.
32.	Iowa	Big Ten	6	Borderline Top 25 material if not for relentless Big Ten road schedule.
33.	Clemson	ACC	6	If QB spot gets settled, C.J. Spiller-led offense could be explosive.
34.	Houston	C-USA	1	QB Case Keenum will fly offense through defense-less C-USA.
35.	Miami	ACC	7	Still-young team will benefit from all that experience of 2008.
36.	South Carolina	SEC	7	Stephen Garcia really needs to be the answer at quarterback.
37.	Notre Dame	Ind	1	No more excuses if Irish can't bust through with this veteran group.
38.	Rutgers	Big East	2	Title in watered-down Big East not out of reach for Scarlet Knights.
39.	Cincinnati	Big East	3	More fun times with QB Tony Pike and WR Mardy Gilyard.
40.	Southern Miss	C-USA	2	School will have to rewrite offensive record book after 2009.
41.	Pittsburgh	Big East	4	Great defensive line will make Panthers compete in Big East.
42.	Arkansas	SEC	8	Improvement is coming in coach Bobby Petrino's second season.
43.	USF	Big East	5	Bulls try to ride star power of QB Matt Grothe, DE George Selvie.
44.	Auburn	SEC	9	No buzz about Gene Chizik's hiring, but spring reports were good.
45.	Arizona	Pac-10	5	Decent play from a new QB will have Cats eking into bowl again.
46.	Missouri	Big 12	7	Tigers had their shot in past two seasons; it's time to rebuild.
47.	Michigan	Big Ten	7	Thanks to defense, UM can start another bowl streak ... but barely.
48.	UCLA	Pac-10	6	Defense good, offense bad ... UCLA finds midpoint of Pac-10.
49.	NC State	ACC	8	All-ACC QB Russell Wilson could lead Pack higher in ACC.
50.	Kentucky	SEC	10	Trio of star defenders give UK a chance at fourth straight bowl.
51.	Northwestern	Big Ten	8	Easy non-league slate sets up Cats for another bowl trip.
52.	Boston College	ACC	9	Coach Spaz has to make do in first season without NFL-quality DTs.
53.	East Carolina	C-USA	3	Still good enough to knock off the big boys and defend league title.
54.	Baylor	Big 12	8	QB Robert Griffin might soon end Baylor's 14-year bowl drought.
55.	Stanford	Pac-10	7	Jim Harbaugh's hard-playing smart guys oh-so-close to a bowl.
56.	Minnesota	Big Ten	9	Goodbye Metrodome, hello on-campus TCF Bank Stadium.
57.	Arizona State	Pac-10	8	Pac-10 is such that Devils are whisker-close to fourth place.
58.	Tulsa	C-USA	4	Big hole at quarterback for 2008's second-highest scoring team.
59.	Maryland	ACC	10	Terps too inconsistent last season to expect bigger things in '09.
60.	Colorado	Big 12	9	Can contend for a bowl, but not for title in mediocre North.
61.	Memphis	C-USA	5	School's first Conference USA title not entirely out of the question.
62.	Central Michigan	MAC	1	League's best quarterback (Dan LeFevour) = league's best team.
63.	Texas A&M	Big 12	10	Aggies went winless against Big 12 South rivals last season.
64.	Vanderbilt	SEC	11	18 starters back from a bowl team ... yes, a Vandy bowl team.
65.	Connecticut	Big East	6	Offense needs to find life, but RB Donald Brown is off to the NFL.
66.	Navy	Ind	2	Offense rolls on, as do the Mids, to a seventh consecutive bowl.
67.	Virginia	ACC	11	Even if new spread offense clicks, Cavs landlocked in Coastal.
68.	Purdue	Big Ten	10	The paucity of Hope: Cupboard far from full for first-year coach.
69.	Nevada	WAC	2	Colin Kaepernick expertly runs Chris Ault's pistol offense.
70.	Kansas State	Big 12	11	Bill Snyder's to-do list: Find QB, improve D, turn back clock.
71.	Duke	ACC	12	Beat two bowl teams last season — Navy and Vanderbilt.
72.	Louisville	Big East	7	This doesn't look like the year Steve Kragthorpe turns it around.
73.	Indiana	Big Ten	11	Standout WR/QB Kellen Lewis dismissed from team in late April.
74.	Western Michigan	MAC	2	Third consecutive bowl likely behind senior QB Tim Hiller.
75.	Louisiana Tech	WAC	3	Bulldogs back for more after 8-win season, Liberty Bowl victory.
76.	Fresno State	WAC	4	Non-conference: At Wisconsin, at Cincinnati, at Illinois.
77.	Air Force	MWC	4	Offense built around promising sophomore QB Tim Jefferson.
78.	Mississippi State	SEC	12	Transition to new coach Dan Mullen's spread will take a while.
79.	Washington	Pac-10	9	Coach Sark, QB Jake Locker give Husky fans reason to cheer.
80.	Marshall	C-USA	6	Herd inching close to first winning season since 2003.
81.	UNLV	MWC	5	Mike Sanford, in fifth season, still looking for a winning record.
82.	Bowling Green	MAC	3	Falcons only 6-6 last season; lost four games by TD or less.
83.	Troy	Sun Belt	1	Loaded defense will keep Trojans on top of league again.
84.	UTEP	C-USA	7	QB Trevor Vittatoe helps Miners keep pace in high-scoring league.
85.	Syracuse	Big East	8	Baby steps would be OK for now for new coach Doug Marrone.
86.	San Diego State	MWC	6	QB Ryan Lindley a good first piece for new coach Brady Hoke.
87.	Colorado State	MWC	7	Steve Fairchild's first season — 7-6, bowl win — was a success.
88.	Buffalo	MAC	4	Defending MAC champs will be fine if new QB Zach Maynard is.
89.	Hawaii	WAC	5	Young offense now experienced; experienced defense now young.
90.	Washington State	Pac-10	10	Offensive questions at QB, RB, WR and OL. Other than that ...
91.	Iowa State	Big 12	12	Paul Rhoads inherits 10-game losing streak from Gene Chizik.
92.	Tulane	C-USA	8	Better talent on hand than last year's 2-10 suggests.
93.	Arkansas State	Sun Belt	2	RB Reggie Arnold looking for 1,000 yards for fourth time.
94.	Ball State	MAC	5	Can't repeat magical ride of 2008 without QB Nate Davis.
95.	Florida Atlantic	Sun Belt	3	Senior QB Rusty Smith aims for the third bowl of his career.
96.	San Jose State	WAC	6	Tough schedule includes opening with BCS winners USC, Utah.
97.	UCF	C-USA	9	Opening up attack after ranking last nationally in offense (229.5).
98.	Wyoming	MWC	8	Ex-Mizzou coordinator Dave Christensen takes over in Laramie.
99.	New Mexico	MWC	9	Games at A&M, Texas Tech await new coach Mike Locksley.
100.	Fla. International	Sun Belt	4	Had only one total win in '06 and '07; came up with five in 2008.
101.	Kent State	MAC	6	Scheduling twist: Five of first seven foes have new coaches.
102.	Ohio	MAC	7	Bobcats have a pair of senior quarterbacks they can win with.
103.	Middle Tennessee	Sun Belt	5	Nineteen returning starters have Blue Raiders feeling better.
104.	Temple	MAC	8	Was 5-2 down the stretch last year, renewing hope for 2009.
105.	UAB	C-USA	10	Eleven starters return on offense, including QB Joe Webb.
106.	SMU	C-USA	11	June Jones will get this going; QB needs to stop throwing INTs.
107.	Toledo	MAC	9	Three losing seasons in a row prompted switch to Tim Beckman.
108.	Rice	C-USA	12	Huge losses on offense will make 10-3 season a distant memory.
109.	Northern Illinois	MAC	10	DE Larry English was 16th pick in draft, NIU's highest ever.
110.	LA.-Monroe	Sun Belt	6	Shaky QB situation keeps Warhawks from higher league rating.
111.	New Mexico State	WAC	7	New coach DeWayne Walker will put the focus on defense.
112.	Army	Ind	3	Black Knights get it right by hiring Rich Ellerson as new coach.
113.	Akron	MAC	11	New on-campus stadium; Zips seek first winning record since '05.
114.	LA.-Lafayette	Sun Belt	7	League's top offense starts over at the skill positions.
115.	Miami (Ohio)	MAC	12	Mike Haywood takes over team that sunk to 10-27 past 3 years.
116.	Eastern Michigan	MAC	13	First-year coach Ron English must overhaul league's worst D.
117.	Idaho	WAC	8	It's always something for Vandals; last winning season came in '99.
118.	Utah State	WAC	9	Aggies turn to ex-Utah defensive coordinator Gary Andersen.
119.	North Texas	Sun Belt	8	Mean Green too kind on defense, was nation's worst in 2008.
120.	Western Kentucky	Sun Belt	9	Hilltoppers start at bottom of college football's biggest mountain.

Wayne Allyn Root's UPSET CLUB SHATTERS World Handicapping Record!

Nails 160 UNDERDOGS THAT WIN OUTRIGHT over two hugely profitable seasons.

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Wayne Allyn Root

I'm Wayne Allyn Root. You've seen me on TV, read my books AND maybe read about my success at picking winners in magazines like *Fortune* and *The Robb Report*. **I have won more money for more bettors than anybody that has ever lived.** *And I did okay by myself & my family.*

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I came up in a blue-collar town with a blue-collar ethic: "Don't dream big because you won't get there."

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They said you can't win at gambling. Yet I was picking **72% SPREAD WINNERS AT AGE 16** as documented in my hometown paper.

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Tell me NO and I'll work ten times harder to prove you WRONG.

And so will football teams! That simple perception led to the creation of my **"Contrarian System"** that has helped me set world records in handicapping! *For example:*

- In 2007, my clients and I cashed on **80 OUTRIGHT UNDERDOGS.**
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Just look at some of the 80 underdog winners I selected in 2008 and see for yourself just some of the games you could have multiplied your winnings on.

Dogs that Won the Game, BEATING the Spread and BEATING the Money Line*:

DATE	SELECTION	(+/–)	OPPONENT	SCORE	RESULT	*
8/28	Stanford	(+3)	Oregon State	36-28	WON OUTRIGHT!	+$125
9/11	No. Carolina	(+6)	Rutgers	44-12	WON OUTRIGHT!	+$210
9/13	Notre Dame	(+2)	Michigan	35-17	WON OUTRIGHT!	+$115
9/18	Colorado	(+3)	West Virginia	17-14	WON OUTRIGHT!	+$125
9/21	Dolphins	(+12½)	Patriots	38-13	WON OUTRIGHT!	+$500
10/11	Texas	(+6 ½)	Oklahoma	45-35	WON OUTRIGHT!	+$200
	Oklahoma St.	(+14)	Missouri	28-23	WON OUTRIGHT!	+$425
10/12	Cardinals	(+5)	Cowboys	30-24	WON OUTRIGHT!	+$180
10/13	Browns	(+8)	Giants	35-14	WON OUTRIGHT!	+$300
10/26	Saints	(+3)	Chargers	37-32	WON OUTRIGHT!	+$150
11/1	Pittsburgh	(+5)	Notre Dame	36-33	WON OUTRIGHT!	+$175
11/8	Iowa	(+8)	Penn State	24-23	WON OUTRIGHT!	+$250
11/22	Tennessee	(+3)	Vanderbilt	20-10	WON OUTRIGHT!	+$135
11/25	Navy	(+3)	No. Illinois	16-0	WON OUTRIGHT!	+$125
11/30	Broncos	(+8 ½)	Jets	34-17	WON OUTRIGHT!	+$320
12/7	49'ers	(+4)	Jets	24-14	WON OUTRIGHT!	+$190
12/21	Redskins	(+5)	Eagles	10-3	WON OUTRIGHT!	+$230

***Amount Won per $100 bet on the MONEY LINE**

NOTE: This is just a representative sampling of the types of strong selections you'll receive as a member of my **"Upset Club."** For a complete record, visit **www.RootToWin.com**

I've packaged this system into my 2009 "UPSET SERVICE" SPECIAL

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1 I look for games where there is likely to be one-way action: Vegas is certain to overprice the favorite because the betting public does a lemming like *"follow the leader"* believing there is safety in numbers. They over bet. The books over-price. **We take advantage of that edge.**

2 If the steam keeps building up on the favorite - I double-check my numbers to make sure we've got **a cover or the outright upset.**

3 Finally, I check sources to makesure that the dog that has been slighted by the public and/or pundits is so pumped up on adrenalin that they are ready to out muscle a more skilled opponent. **That's when we get the outright "upset."**

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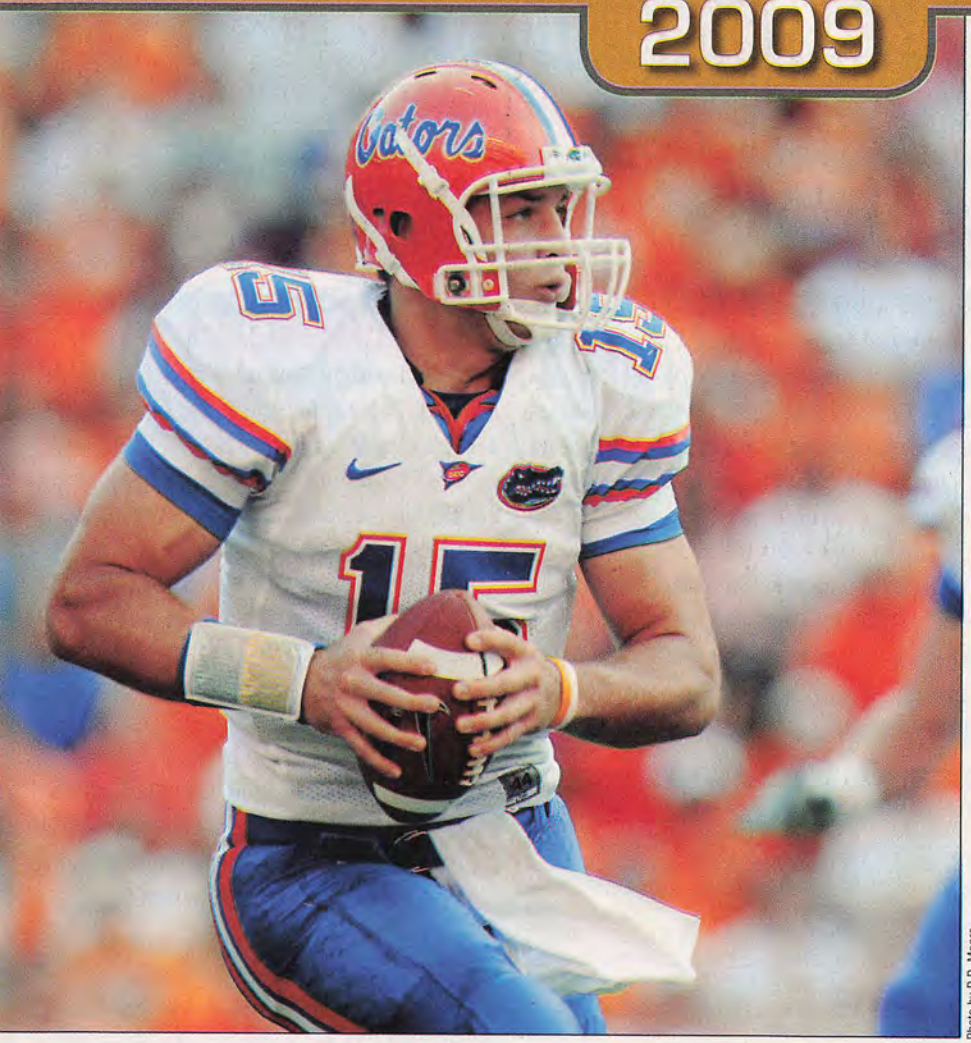


Photo by R.D. Moore

Tebow Ready to Erase Nagging Next-Level Doubts

By Anthony Gimino

Superman has a flaw.

It's not a big flaw. But it's there. A little hole in his game, which leads to doubt, which leads to cloudy projections, which leads some to wonder if Florida quarterback Tim Tebow will ever amount to anything more than, oh, being carved into college football's Mount Rushmore.

"The most polarizing NFL prospect in the country," is how one NFL scout described Tebow to *Lindy's*.

He has pretty much done it all in college — two national championships, one Heisman Trophy, one postgame speech that is commemorated on a silver plaque at Florida — but pro scouts wonder about the simplest of things.

Such as, can Tebow be effective taking a snap from center?

There it is. That little flaw.

Flaw or not, polarizing or not, that's not really the concern right here, right now. College football has enjoyed Tebow just the way he is, and that's why, in what could be one of the most engaging Heisman races ever, he is *Lindy's* preseason Offensive Player of the Year.

Oklahoma quarterback Sam Bradford, like Tebow, could make history by joining Ohio State's Archie Griffin as a two-time Heisman winner. Texas quarterback Colt McCoy, who might have done more with less last season, is angling to steal Heisman and national title game thunder from the other two.

But it's Tebow's team that starts No. 1, and it's Tebow who so far has truly transcended the game.

Put it this way: Would you really want to bet against him?

"The competitiveness, the intelligence, the toughness ... I don't want to say he's maxed out," said Florida coach Urban Meyer. "But, obviously, he's as good as there is."

Probably so, and then Meyer and new quarterbacks coach Scot Loeffler set about this spring making Tebow better at everything else. Not an overhaul, but tinkering. The Gators still want him to be Tim Tebow, not Tom Brady.

Speaking of Brady, he was one of Loeffler's pupils at Michigan. So were Brian Griese and Chad Henne. Loeffler, 34, spent last season with the Detroit Lions.

Whatever Tebow has been doing has been just fine. In addition to running like a tailback, in three seasons he has thrown for 67 touchdowns, with only 11 interceptions. Even with his less-than-Pro Bowl delivery, he managed to go 230 consecutive passes without an interception.

But when scouts previously deconstructed that delivery, they didn't like his long windup ... or that somewhat sidearm delivery ... or what looked like poor footwork. You can get away with that stuff in college, kid, but not when playing with the big boys.

The good news is Loeffler knows how to fix all that. By the end of spring, Tebow's motion was tighter, more over the top and his lower body was more involved in the mechanics of the throw. Spirals and accuracy. Just how the scouts like it.

"You can see the difference," Meyer said.

ALL-AMERICA TEAM

Tebow even took snaps from under center, which will be part of the Gators' offense this season.

"There are certain areas that he needed work with," Meyer said.

"We want him to play some under center. He never really did it in high school. He was just not comfortable with it. We didn't spend a lot of time teaching it.

"Now, the quarterback coach I hired is very efficient teaching it. We've done it. I would like to have an I-formation package because I feel we have three tailbacks who can play for the first time since our staff has been here."

Will this all be enough to alleviate scouts' fears?

"The beauty of Urban Meyer's spread option attack is that the quarterback is rarely asked to make more than a read or two before having the option to run with the ball," the scout told *Lindy's*. "In the NFL, Tebow will be asked to make many more reads and won't be able to run with the consistent success he's had in college.

"He isn't a particularly accurate passer much of the time. Tebow sprays passes a bit, often forcing his receivers to slow or accelerate on medium-range and longer passes. He is able to get away with it at the collegiate level because the defenses are spread apart so much, but he could struggle in the NFL."

In addition, Tebow will have to overcome another kind of Heisman curse.

Only two Heisman-winning quarterbacks (and only one pure quarterback) have gone from winning the statue to the pro football Hall of Fame — Notre Dame's Paul Hornung and Navy's Roger Staubach.

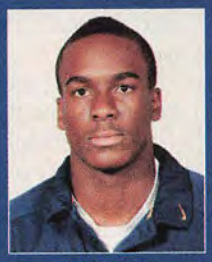
Of the previous 11 Heisman-winning quarterbacks before Bradford and Tebow, dating to Andre Ware in 1989, only Carson Palmer has made it to the Pro Bowl.

So while Tebow is tearing up college again — building on his 9,112 career yards and school-record 43 rushing touchdowns — the scouts will be wondering about his translatable skills.

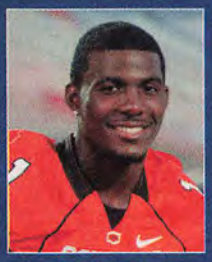
As for the rest of us, for one more season, we get to appreciate watching Superman fly.

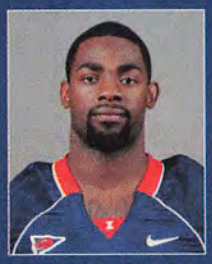
OFFENSE

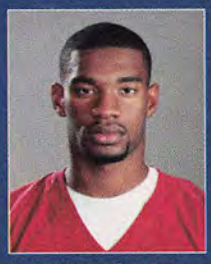
Tim Tebow


Jahvid Best

Jonathan Dwyer


Dez Bryant


Arrelious Benn


Jermaine Gresham

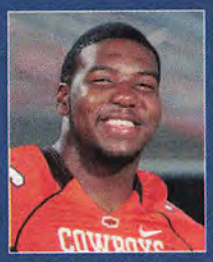
FIRST TEAM

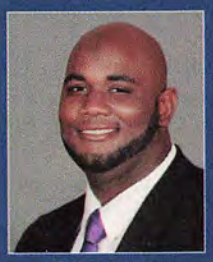
Pos	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
QB	Tim Tebow	6-3	245	Sr.	Florida
RB	Jahvid Best	5-10	195	Jr.	Cal
RB	Jonathan Dwyer	6-0	235	Jr.	Georgia Tech
WR	Dez Bryant	6-2	215	Jr.	Oklahoma State
WR	Arrelious Benn	6-2	220	Jr.	Illinois
TE	Jermaine Gresham	6-6	261	Sr.	Oklahoma
C	Kris O'Dowd	6-5	300	Jr.	USC
OL	Russell Okung	6-6	305	Sr.	Oklahoma State
OL	Ciron Black	6-5	325	Sr.	LSU
OL	Trent Williams	6-5	308	Sr.	Oklahoma
OL	Adam Ulatoski	6-8	302	Sr.	Texas
PK	Kai Forbath	6-0	198	Jr.	UCLA

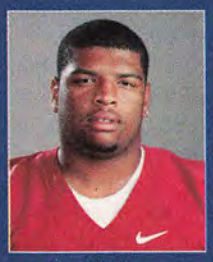
SECOND TEAM

Pos	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
QB	Sam Bradford	6-4	218	Jr.	Oklahoma
RB	Kendall Hunter	5-8	190	Jr.	Oklahoma State
RB	Noel Devine	5-8	170	Jr.	West Virginia
WR	Julio Jones	6-4	210	So.	Alabama
WR	Mardy Gilyard	6-1	180	Sr.	Cincinnati
TE	Rob Gronkowski	6-6	265	Jr.	Arizona
C	John Estes	6-3	295	Sr.	Hawaii
OL	Brandon Carter	6-7	354	Sr.	Texas Tech
OL	John Jerry	6-5	350	Sr.	Ole Miss
OL	Rodney Hudson	6-2	285	Jr.	Florida State
OL	Mike Johnson	6-6	305	Sr.	Alabama
PK	Matt Bosher	6-0	205	Jr.	Miami

Kris O'Dowd


Russell Okung


Ciron Black


Trent Williams

Adam Ulatoski

Kai Forbath

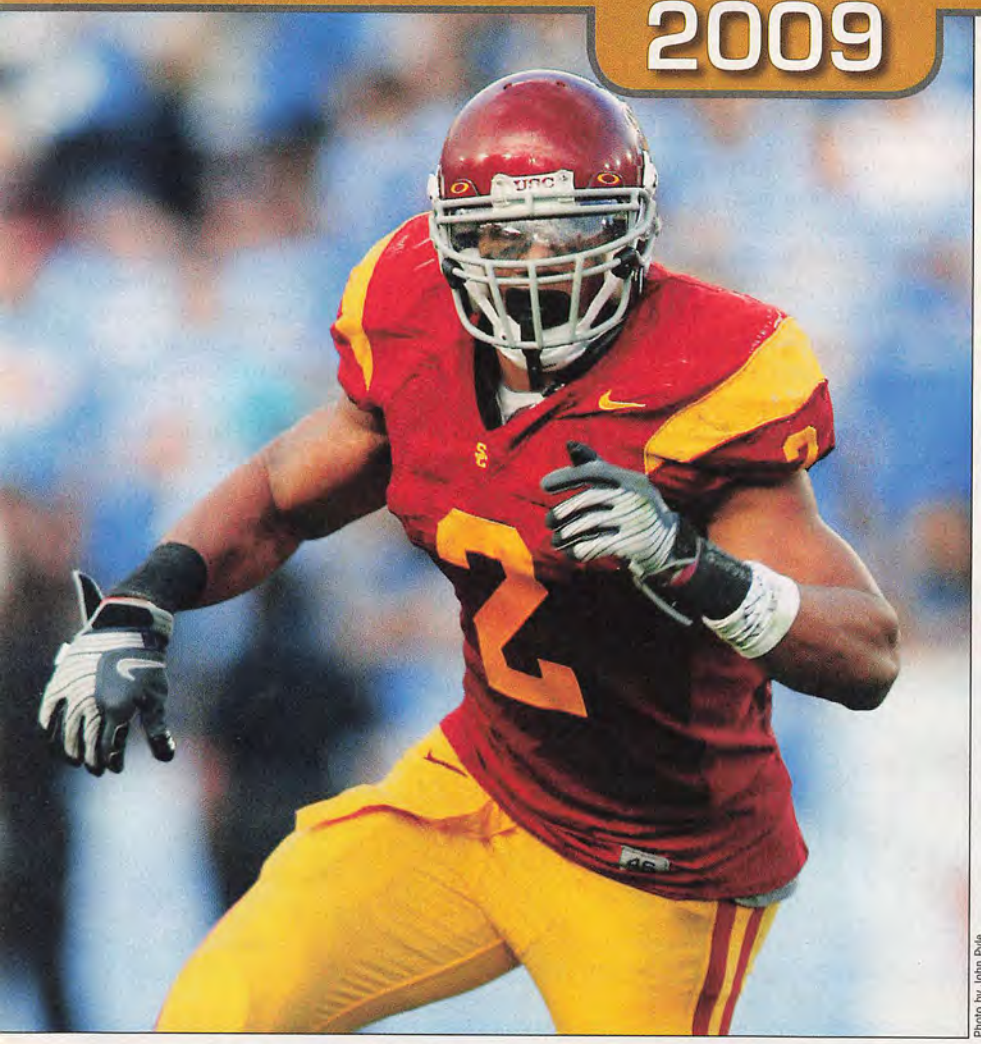


Photo by John Pyle

Trojans' 'Say Hey' Safety Likes Being a Kid

By Scott Wolf

Taylor Mays loves going to school at USC. OK, maybe that's a bit extreme. He loves being at USC.

"I can't say I want to take Spanish 2 next year," Mays said. "That's not causing me to come back."

The other trappings that come with being an All-American football player for one of the nation's marquee programs rate much higher. There's the comfort of being in college, which allows for more enthusiasm than the all-business mentality of the No Fun League (NFL). There's also the chance to get his degree. Oh, and there's the girls.

Those factors played a role in Mays' surprising decision in January to delay the NFL for one year and return for his senior season. A three-time All-American who is a physical aberration — Mays is 6-3, 230 pounds and runs the 40-yard dash in 4.3 seconds, fastest on the USC team — Mays knew he could become a top 10 pick in the 2009 Draft.

"I knew my decision would cost me a million dollars right now, but I thought it would be best for me," Mays said. "I think in 10 or 20 years, I'll look back and think I made the right decision."

But even if the money tantalized Mays, he realized he wanted to stay at USC while eating a Monday-night dinner at a sorority house right before he made his decision.

"I realized how much I liked college," Mays said. "I won't be able to do these things once I'm in the NFL. College is fun for me."

He also would not be in Los Angeles if he turned pro, which would mean he could no longer plead for the affections of reality TV star Lauren Conrad of the MTV show "The Hills."

"I want to have her come to a game next season," Mays said. "That's my goal."

Of course, there were some other more logical reasons Mays found to return.

In USC coach Pete Carroll's defense, the free safety is often employed as a centerfielder. Mays prefers to be in a more aggressive role this season, perhaps at strong safety or maybe just playing closer to the line of scrimmage.

Even though he led USC with nine passes broken up, his role as a safety net gave some the impression that he did not make enough plays.

"I want to be closer to the action," Mays said. "People who know football know what my role on the defense is, but I'd like to be more involved this season."

Carroll agreed to tweak Mays' duties, but said the public needs to understand how effective the All-American played the past three seasons.

"People do not go deep on us," Carroll said. "He doesn't give up the deep ball. That might not mean he's making a flashy tackle, but he's influenced the game quite a bit. Every team we play respects him and what he's doing for us."

One team did try to challenge Mays last season: California. The Golden Bears threw a flurry of deep balls at the Trojans; Mays deflected four passes and was selected Pacific-10 Conference Player of the Week.

ALL-AMERICA TEAM

But who could blame the other teams for ignoring Mays?

He is faster than most wide receivers, but as big as a linebacker. When his close friend, USC quarterback Mark Sanchez, was considering his own NFL decision, Mays said, "If Mark leaves, I'll play quarterback, and we'll run the option."

He was joking. Sort of. Ever since he arrived as a freshman, he has flirted with the idea of being a two-way player, but Carroll never went for it.

When new USC starting quarterback Aaron Corp used his own speed to break a run during a spring scrimmage, he quickly slid to the ground when he saw Mays approaching.

But Mays' fearsome physical ability stays on the field.

"Taylor's really a Teddy Bear," USC wide receiver Jordan Cameron said. "He'll do anything for you if you need something. He's great around kids and he loves (my nephew). He'll take care of him or give me rides to school if I need one. He's a great friend."

He is also all business. Last season, he strictly followed a regimen that included eating healthy pre-made meals to keep his body fat low even though he already appears to be all-muscle.

The NFL's temporary loss is a boon to Carroll. He expected to plug some major defensive holes as two defenders were first-round draft picks (Brian Cushing, Clay Matthews), two were second-round picks (Rey Maualuga, Fili Moala), and he lost several other starters, including strong safety Kevin Ellison.

But the secondary immediately became much less of an issue when Mays said he would come back.

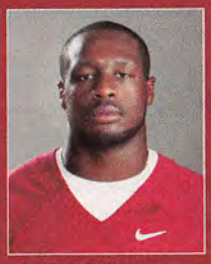
"He's going to go down as one of the greatest safeties at USC," said Carroll, who also coached another great Trojan safety (Ronnie Lott) in the NFL.

"(He and Lott) have some similarities too. But he's also got some things he wants to accomplish and get better at and he's seen how guys benefited here by coming back for their senior seasons."

DEFENSE

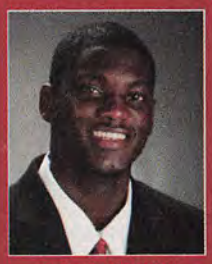
Jerry Hughes

George Selvie


Gerald McCoy

Terrence Cody

Brandon Spikes


Rolando McClain

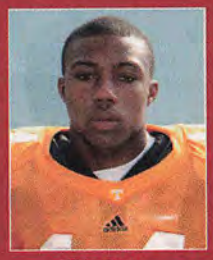
FIRST TEAM

Pos	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
DL	Jerry Hughes	6-3	257	Sr.	TCU
DL	George Selvie	6-4	245	Sr.	USF
DL	Gerald McCoy	6-4	295	Jr.	Oklahoma
DL	Terrence Cody	6-5	365	Sr.	Alabama
LB	Brandon Spikes	6-3	258	Sr.	Florida
LB	Rolando McClain	6-4	249	Jr.	Alabama
LB	Mark Herzlich	6-4	238	Sr.	Boston College
DB	Eric Berry	5-11	203	Jr.	Tennessee
DB	Trevard Lindley	6-0	175	Sr.	Kentucky
DB	Taylor Mays	6-3	230	Sr.	USC
DB	Syd'Quan Thompson	5-9	191	Sr.	Cal
P	Derek Epperson	6-3	240	Jr.	Baylor

SECOND TEAM

Pos	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
DL	Jermaine Cunningham	6-3	252	Sr.	Florida
DL	Antonio Coleman	6-3	257	Sr.	Auburn
DL	Sergio Kindle	6-4	239	Sr.	Texas
DL	Ndamukong Suh	6-4	300	Sr.	Nebraska
LB	Sean Weatherspoon	6-2	245	Sr.	Missouri
LB	Eric Norwood	6-1	252	Sr.	South Carolina
LB	Rennie Curran	5-11	222	Jr.	Georgia
DB	Morgan Burnett	6-1	210	Jr.	Georgia Tech
DB	Kurt Coleman	5-11	188	Sr.	Ohio State
DB	Joe Haden	5-11	190	Jr.	Florida
DB	Kyle Wilson	5-10	185	Sr.	Boise State
P	Zoltan Mesko	6-5	238	Sr.	Michigan

Mark Herzlich


Eric Berry

Trevard Lindley

Taylor Mays

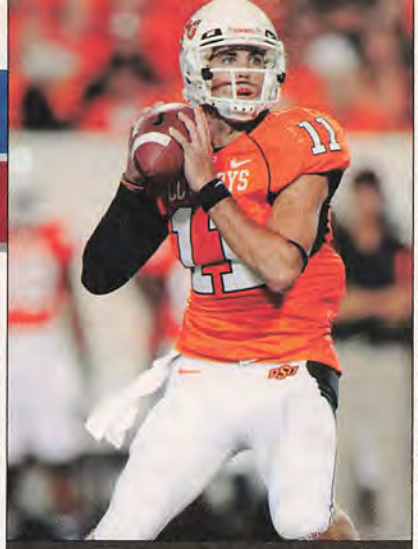
Syd'Quan Thompson

Derek Epperson

PLAYER RATINGS

QUARTERBACKS

There's the Big 3, but Don't Forget About Big Z



ZAC ROBINSON

Photo by John Williamson

Zac Robinson smiled as if he actually liked the question.

If Sam Bradford, Colt McCoy and Tim Tebow represent college football's best quarterbacks, what would you think about being ranked No. 4?

But almost imperceptibly, Robinson betrayed just a tiny bit of aggravation, as though he's being underestimated.

"It's OK," said the Oklahoma State senior.

Better to be in the top three, then?

"Well," Robinson shrugged, "I mean, you definitely would like to be up there."

Tebow owns the 2007 Heisman and the 2008 national championship (and a significant piece of the 2006 national title).

Bradford owns the '08 Heisman and the Davey O'Brien Award to go with a Big 12 title and last year's national runner-up ribbon.

McCoy owns 42 Texas records, the '08 Walter Camp National Player of the Year award and three bowl MVP trophies.

They finished Bradford-McCoy-Tebow in the '08 Heisman balloting, and it would be a huge upset if one didn't win it this year. Clearly, they are the best of the best among college football quarterbacks.

Robinson, though, might be the best of the rest.

In two seasons as the Cowboys' starter, he has led one of the nation's most potent offenses, becoming Oklahoma State's career leader in total offense. In 42 starts from 1986 to '89, Mike Gundy compiled 7,749 yards. In 24 career starts, Robinson has amassed 7,786 yards.

Now, Gundy is the Cowboys' head coach, and he has stated clearly that he would not trade his quarterback for another ... anywhere.

Robinson's teammates seem to agree.

"Man, he's a big-time leader," said All-American receiver Dez Bryant. "He's great. Everybody respects him. Whatever Zac says, that's what goes."

In an offense that averaged 244 rushing yards a game the past two seasons, Robinson has thrown for 5,888 yards and 48 touchdowns, and ran for 1,409 yards and 17 touchdowns. The 6-3, 222-pound Robinson has a frame and career efficiency rating (155.3, fifth among active FBS quarterbacks) that has NFL scouts noticing.

The website NFLDraftScout.com listed Robinson as the fourth-best senior QB prospect (a projected third-round pick) behind McCoy, Tebow and Central Michigan's Dan LeFevour.

Robinson originally committed to Kansas State as a senior at Chatfield High School in Littleton, Colo. But when Gundy was hired to replace Les Miles in 2005, Larry Fedora was named offensive coordinator. Fedora now is head coach at Southern Mississippi, but his wide-open, fast-paced offense interested Robinson enough to decommit from K-State and pledge to OSU.

Robinson, who played wideout as a high school junior, was hardly a signing day afterthought. But he was expected to wait at OSU behind former five-star signee Bobby Reid.

Robinson redshirted during O-State's dismal 2005 season (the Cowboys finished 1-7 in Big 12 play), and by the midway point of 2006, it was apparent he had gained ground on Reid. Many suggested, Robinson would soon pass him.

It happened for good early in 2007, when Robinson replaced Reid in a crushing defeat at Troy. The following week, Robinson had 211 yards passing and 116 yards rushing in a wild shootout victory over Texas Tech, firmly entrenching himself as the starter.

Since then, the often-unstoppable Cowboy offense — seventh overall in 2007, sixth in 2008, a two-year average of 487 yards a game — has belonged to Robinson.

"He's confident, that's the biggest thing," said Bryant. "And he knows how to take this team far."

Depending on how far, maybe by the end of the season the public will offer him membership into that elite club with Bradford, McCoy and Tebow.

"Yeah, those guys are all great players," he said. "It's fun to be mentioned in the same breath with those guys."

— John E. Hoover

TOP QUARTERBACKS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Tim Tebow**	Sr.	Florida
	Anything less than a third title and second Heisman = disappointment?		
2.	**Sam Bradford**	Jr.	Oklahoma
	Two-time national leader in passing efficiency.		
3.	**Colt McCoy**	Sr.	Texas
	Vince Young won 30 games; McCoy is at 32 with a chance at 46.		
4.	**Zac Robinson**	Sr.	Oklahoma St.
	Has all the tools around him to be as prolific as any of the top QBs.		
5.	**Jevan Snead**	Jr.	Ole Miss
	Could end up as the best pro prospect on this list.		
6.	**Todd Reesing**	Sr.	Kansas
	Has 13 300-yard passing games in the past two seasons.		
7.	**Max Hall**	Sr.	BYU
	He's not big, but he's a cocksure leader who can rip through defenses.		
8.	**Dan LeFevour**	Sr.	Central Michigan
	Nice pro prospect who will reach 10,000 yards early in the season.		
9	**Jeremiah Masoli**	Jr.	Oregon
	Dual threat came from nowhere last season, had a great spring.		
10.	**Terrelle Pryor**	So.	Ohio State
	Has to prove it; could be much higher (or lower) by end of the year.		
11.	**Juice Williams**	Sr.	Illinois
	Led the Big Ten last year in total offense with 324.3 yards per game.		
12.	**Daryll Clark**	Sr.	Penn State
	Can he be as productive without his all-senior receiver friends?		
13.	**Robert Griffin**	So.	Baylor
	Explosive speed, accuracy make him perfect fit in Art Briles' offense.		
14.	**Case Keenum**	Jr.	Houston
	Threw for 5,020 yards in 2008; should have more of the same in '09.		
15.	**Jake Locker**	Jr.	Washington
	Can Steve Sarkisian turn him into "Tebow Northwest," as advertised?		
16.	**Colin Kaepernick**	Jr.	Nevada
	2008: Had a 397-yard passing game and a 240-yard rushing game.		
17.	**Tony Pike**	Sr.	Cincinnati
	6-6 senior came on strong in the second half of last season.		
18.	**Matt Grothe**	Sr.	South Florida
	Has thrown for more than 8,000 yards, rushed for more than 2,000.		
19.	**Russell Wilson**	So.	NC State
	First-team All-ACC as frosh; only one INT in 275 pass attempts.		
20.	**Riley Skinner**	Sr.	Wake Forest
	Fourth-year starter helped Wake to 28 victories in past three seasons.		
21.	**Kellen Moore**	So.	Boise State
	WAC Freshman of Year completed nearly 70 percent of his passes.		
22.	**Tim Hiller**	Sr.	Western Michigan
	Enters season projected as a mid-round NFL Draft pick.		
23.	**Jimmy Clausen**	Jr.	Notre Dame
	Has deep threats and veteran line ... will a breakout year be next?		
24.	**Trevor Vittattoe**	Jr.	UTEP
	Already up to 58 career TD passes, with only 16 interceptions.		
25.	**Aaron Corp**	So.	USC
	Never even started, but it ain't easy just winning the Trojans' QB job.		

PLAYER RATINGS

RUNNING BACKS

A Tailback for '09 Heisman? Only the Best One

JAHVID BEST

Photo by Tomasso DeRosa

Cal tailback Jahvid Best did not participate in spring practice, but he provided the exclamation point.

Minutes after the final practice, Best announced that not only would he be ready for training camp following offseason elbow and foot surgery, he'd also be ready for summer workouts.

That's big news for the Bears and bad news for the 12 teams charged with containing the blazingly fast junior.

He enters the '09 season as one of the, uh ... best tailbacks in the country and one of the most exciting players in football, including the league that plays on Sundays.

Consider that last year he averaged eight yards a carry and 132 yards a game.

He scored from 80 yards out. And from 84 yards out. And from 86 yards out.

He finished second in the country in all-purpose yards and third in rushing.

And he did it for a team that lacked a consistent aerial attack to force defenses to respect the pass.

Which means, if Best is as healthy as he expects to be and the Bears show modest improvement in their passing game, he could contend for the Heisman Trophy and All-American honors.

"Once we get the passing game down, our options are limitless," he said.

Best's success comes as little surprise to those who watched him rush for 3,345 yards and score 48 touchdowns as a high school senior. He also won the California state 100-meter title (10.31 seconds) and finished second in the 200 (20.65).

The No. 18-rated tailback in the country, he could have gone to USC but opted for Cal, which offered more playing time and was closer to his home in nearby Richmond. It took Bear watchers about 10 minutes to realize Best was special.

As a freshman, he averaged 7.6 yards a carry in limited action behind tailback Justin Forsett, and was named All-Pac-10 for his play on special teams.

As the starter in '08, he rushed for 1,580 yards despite missing all of one game and part of a second because of a dislocated elbow. (He also played through a foot injury that prompted the second offseason surgery.)

In the final regular-season game, against Washington, Best rushed for 311 yards — a Cal record and the fourth-best performance in Pac-10 history.

"When he gets in the open field, it's a footrace, and he wins most of those," Bears coach Jeff Tedford said.

In January, Best had the elbow and foot repaired. The procedures forced him to miss spring ball, but he made the most of his rehabilitation by adding 15 pounds of muscle (up to 205).

"I want to be more of an all-around back," he said of the reason behind the added strength. "To get to the next level, you have to be a complete back. I have to be more durable."

In the shorter term, Best has the Rose Bowl — Cal hasn't spent New Year's in Pasadena since 1959 — and the Heisman Trophy in his sights.

The fact that he should be healthy for training camp means he'll be in the preseason Heisman discussions, likely as a second-tier candidate behind Tim Tebow, Sam Bradford and Colt McCoy.

Granted, that's a tough trio to overtake. But Best's style — his ability to bust long runs, to make defensive players look silly, and to get himself on SportsCenter — means he should get the coast-to-coast exposure necessary to stay in the Heisman hunt, especially if he helps the Bears upset league-favorite USC in an Oct. 3 home game.

To be a serious contender in the season's final fortnight depends on Best posting big numbers and Cal having a big year. One has everything to do with the other, and both are definitely do-able.

— Jon Wilner

TOP RUNNING BACKS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Jahvid Best** Offseason surgeries won't slow sprinter who averaged 8.14 ypc in '08.	Jr.	California
2.	**Jonathan Dwyer** Had 1,395 yards last season in triple-option attack that will get better.	Jr.	Georgia Tech
3.	**Kendall Hunter** 5-8 back had nine 100-yard games and 15 TDs last season.	Jr.	Oklahoma State
4.	**Noel Devine** The Mountaineers' go-to guy this season; uncatchable in open field.	Jr.	West Virginia
5.	**Jacquizz Rodgers** Little guy ran through USC, was Pac-10 Offensive Player of the Year.	So.	Oregon State
6.	**DeMarco Murray** Tag-team tailback a game-breaker who could use a full healthy season.	Jr.	Oklahoma
7.	**C.J. Spiller** No more Thunder and Lightning in Tigers backfield ... just Lightning.	Sr.	Clemson
8.	**Chris Brown** Powerful back (20 TDs last season) improved speed in offseason.	Sr.	Oklahoma
9.	**Charles Scott** Big, strong back who knows how to find the end zone (18 TDs in 2008).	Sr.	LSU
10.	**Evan Royster** Smooth runner is Big Ten's top returning tailback (1,236 yards).	Jr.	Penn State
11.	**LeGarrette Blount** In spring doghouse, but his mix of speed and power is as good as any.	Sr.	Oregon
12.	**MiQuale Lewis** Short but solid; rushed for 1,736 yards and 22 touchdowns last year.	Sr.	Ball State
13.	**Harvey Unga** A 1,000-yard runner and nifty pass-catcher in BYU's spread offense.	Jr.	BYU
14.	**Michael Smith** Had four games of at least 129 rushing yards against SEC competition.	Sr.	Arkansas
15.	**Damion Fletcher** Suspended in spring, likely back for fourth consecutive 1,000-yard season.	Sr.	Southern Miss
16.	**Da'Rel Scott** Shifty runner will need to bust some moves behind a rebuilt O-line.	Jr.	Maryland
17.	**Anthony Dixon** 20 pounds lighter, ready to do it all in Dan Mullen's new spread offense.	Sr.	Mississippi State
18.	**Darren Evans** Got rolling late in freshman season — 746 yards in final six games.	So.	Virginia Tech
19.	**John Clay** Yet another bruising tailback off the Wisconsin assembly line.	So.	Wisconsin
20.	**Mark Ingram** More of the featured back this season with Glen Coffee gone.	So.	Alabama
21.	**Vai Taua** Led WAC with 1,521 rushing yards, 15 touchdowns in pistol offense.	Jr.	Nevada
22.	**Derrick Washington** Ran for 1,000 yards on a bum knee; will have more of the burden this year.	Jr.	Missouri
23.	**Toby Gerhart** Just so tough to bring down ... but will he opt for pro baseball instead?	Sr.	Stanford
24.	**Bryce Beall** Posted school freshman records of 1,247 yards and 13 touchdowns.	So.	Houston
25.	**Stafon Johnson** Or Joe McKnight ... or C.J. Gable ... or Allen Bradford ...	Sr.	USC

PLAYER RATINGS

RECEIVERS

Big-play Benn Being Heard at Illinois

More determined. More mature. Ready to do everything he can to ensure that Illinois gets it right this year.

That's where junior receiver Arrelious Benn's gaze is set as he prepares for what is likely his last season in Champaign.

It all seemed to come so easy when Benn was named the Big Ten Freshman of the Year in 2007 after he had caused a national stir by passing on Notre Dame to be on the ground floor of Ron Zook's turnaround at Illinois.

ARRELIOUS BENN

Photo by Chris Bernacchi-Sportpics

Despite playing all season through a training-camp shoulder injury, he caught 54 passes for 676 yards, and went 90 yards with a back-breaking kickoff for a touchdown in Illinois' win over Penn State. Best of all, he enjoyed a surprise trip to the Rose Bowl.

Then in 2008, despite being a marked man, he caught 67 passes for 1,055 yards. He was third in the Big Ten with 5.6 catches a game and second with 87.9 receiving yards.

It didn't add up to much, though, as Illinois, hoping to build on a 9-4 record, slipped back to 5-7 and remained home during the bowl season.

This fall, Benn and quarterback Juice Williams intend to grab the reins and keep the Illini on track.

"I want to win," said the 6-2, 220-pound native of Washington, D.C.

"I'm working on everything. There' s always room for improvement as far as my game. And I want to help the team out as far as being a vocal leader, and leading by example."

If Benn can reach those goals, he'll bolster his standing among NFL scouts and general managers, who already appreciate the potential of a prospect who has that rare combination of size, speed, agility and toughness.

Although able to elude would-be tacklers, Benn occasionally has shown an interest in simply running over opponents, a tendency that sometimes leaves Zook shaking his head.

Benn rates among the top three receivers for the 2010 draft, and projects as a top-10 pick by most NFL Draft experts. He's expected to pass on his senior season, following the lead of his former Washington Dunbar High teammate, cornerback Vontae Davis (2009 draft), and running back Rashard Mendenhall (2008).

But that's not on Benn's mind now. He's focused on making sure Illinois takes care of business this fall and challenges for the Big Ten title.

"He's changed into a really confident, serious football player," Illinois receivers coach Jim Pry said.

"Not that he wasn't before, but he's taken his game to another level. He's older. He has a presence about him. He knows what's going on, not only where to be, but how to do it."

In some ways, Benn began applying himself in high school, becoming the nation's No. 2 receiver recruit. Visiting his older brother, Trulon Henry, who served four years for the robbery of a supermarket bank branch, in prison was a painful reminder of how things can go wrong.

That inspired Benn to finish high school in 3 1/2 years, which enabled him to enroll early at Illinois and led to his fast start as a freshman.

The story had a happy ending when Henry, having served his time, became a top-notch safety last fall at College of DuPage, a Chicago-area junior college.

With that experience in mind, it's understandable that Benn has hooked up with Williams in more than the passing game. They're about leadership.

"We talk about that all the time," Benn said. "We started in the offseason, setting rules and seeing who's going to follow them and who's not. Now, we're more together as a team."

That maturity impresses Zook as much as Benn's considerable football skills.

"(Benn) may be a better person than he is a player," the Illini coach said. "He's just that type of guy."

— Herb Gould

TOP WIDE RECEIVERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Dez Bryant**	Jr.	Oklahoma State
	Caught 19 touchdowns and averaged 17 yards per catch in 2008.		
2.	**Arrelious Benn**	Jr.	Illinois
	Battling with Dez Bryant for top pro prospect among junior wideouts.		
3.	**Julio Jones**	So.	Alabama
	After two more years, he'll leave as the program's best-ever WR.		
4.	**Mardy Gilyard**	Sr.	Cincinnati
	Big-time playmaker at receiver, and a sizzling kick returner.		
5.	**Dezmon Briscoe**	Jr.	Kansas
	Very tough to corral after the catch; had 1,407 yards, 15 TDs last season.		
6.	**A.J. Green**	So.	Georgia
	Deep threat was SEC Freshman of the Year (56 catches, 963 yards).		
7.	**Eric Decker**	Sr.	Minnesota
	School-record 84 catches in 2008; might decide he likes baseball better.		
8.	**Brandon LaFell**	Sr.	LSU
	Size, speed, hands ... and a pretty good bet for the 2010 first round.		
9.	**DeAndre Brown**	So.	Southern Miss
	If he comes back fine from broken leg, he's as good as any receiver.		
10.	**Damian Williams**	Jr.	USC
	Ex-Arkansas WR emerged last season as USC's go-to guy.		
11.	**Jordan Shipley**	Sr.	Texas
	Great rapport with QB Colt McCoy and oh-so-cool in the clutch.		
12.	**Naaman Roosevelt**	Sr.	Buffalo
	Buffalo native caught 104 passes for 1,402 yards and 13 TDs in '08.		
13.	**Brandon Banks**	Sr.	Kansas State
	Little guy (5-7) was Big 12's Offensive Newcomer of the Year last season.		
14.	**Dexter McCluster**	Sr.	Ole Miss
	Hybrid WR is the centerpiece in Houston Nutt's Wild Rebel formation.		
15.	**Golden Tate**	Jr.	Notre Dame
	Emerged as deep threat, averaging close to 19 yards per reception.		
16.	**Kerry Meier**	Sr.	Kansas
	Remember when he was a QB? Easy to forget after his 97 catches in '08.		
17.	**James Rodgers**	Jr.	Oregon State
	He'll keep running the fly sweep until defenses can find a way to stop it.		
18.	**Emmanuel Sanders**	Sr.	SMU
	He and Aldrick Robinson will continue to go crazy in June Jones' offense.		
19.	**Ryan Wolfe**	Sr.	UNLV
	A stalwart on losing teams: 209 career catches for 2,735 yards.		
20.	**Michael Floyd**	So.	Notre Dame
	Go-up-and-get-it WR is another downfield target for QB Jimmy Clausen.		

TOP TIGHT ENDS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Jermaine Gresham**	Sr.	Oklahoma
	The numbers speak: 66 catches, 950 yards, 14 touchdowns last season.		
2.	**Rob Gronkowski**	Jr.	Arizona
	If you could label only one player as a "physical freak," this is your man.		
3.	**Dennis Pitta**	Sr.	BYU
	Great fit in the spread; his 1,083 receiving yards led nation's tight ends.		
4.	**D.J. Williams**	Jr.	Arkansas
	Everyone knows he can catch, so he worked harder on blocking in spring.		
5.	**Aaron Hernandez**	Jr.	Florida
	Ready for stardom after being an injury replacement last season.		

PLAYER RATINGS

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN

LSU's Black Throwing Shadows of His Own

CIRON BLACK

Photo by Derick Hingle/Icon SMI

At 6-5, 325 pounds, Ciron Black casts a huge shadow.

But somehow, the LSU senior offensive tackle has managed to find even larger shadows to play in.

Last season was a prime example. Black played well — very well — but talk about the Tigers' offensive line generally began with towering offensive guard Herman Johnson, who earned All-America honors. Johnson, the largest baby ever born in Louisiana, had all kinds of name recognition to go with size and ability.

Now Black finds himself on a line that includes sophomore center T-Bob Hebert, who has a catchy nickname and happens to be the son of former NFL quarterback Bobby Hebert. That's name recognition personified in Louisiana.

That's, OK, though. The well-mannered Black is comfortable with his skills and with himself. Anyway, those who really matter know Black's worth.

A possible first-round pick after his junior season, Black considered entering the NFL Draft, but opted to return. Now he projects as an almost certain first-rounder next April.

"I can only tell you that it's a very unselfish decision," coach Les Miles said of Black and running back Charles Scott, who also investigated his NFL options but decided to return to Baton Rouge. "Players who come back for their senior year, historically, have always had better years."

If so, LSU is in for a treat considering the superb level at which Black has played for three years. A starter in 40 consecutive games, he has been LSU's best lineman during much of that time.

As an All-Southeastern Conference second-team selection last year, he finished with a team-best 68 knockdowns while playing 884 snaps. He played in a school-record 1,031 snaps as a sophomore and had 19 pancake blocks as a redshirt freshman.

"I have a lot more to do in college in terms of getting better on the field and also becoming more of a man and more of a leader for my team," said Black, from Tyler, Texas. "We have so much potential for this team in the 2009 season."

Black will anchor a veteran line that lost Johnson and center Brett Helms, but welcomes back junior right tackle Joseph Barksdale and senior right guard Lyle Hitt. Add to that the tenacious Hebert and rugged senior tight end Richard Dickson, and LSU is sure to have a powerful running game again.

The returnees also figure to lend support to sophomore quarterback Jordan Jefferson, who started the final two games of 2008.

Black was instrumental in the Tigers finishing fourth in the SEC in rushing in 2008 with an average of 166.8 yards per game. LSU averaged even more in 2007 while winning the 2007 BCS national championship.

It was then that Black's compassion came to light. For the national championship game against Ohio State, he wrote the name of an 8-year-old cancer patient on his wristband. Black first posted a message on the boy's online guestbook while the Louisiana youngster was hospitalized at St. Jude's Research Center in Memphis, Tenn.

Black galvanized his team and fans alike. Miles sent the boy a T-shirt that read, "This is what a true champion looks like."

In his own way, Black has the look of one, too. Obviously, he's devoted himself to worthy causes off the field while working diligently to excel on it. He's also committed to earning his college degree.

"I did a lot of praying with my family, and a lot of talking with my coaches, and I came out with the conclusion that it would be really good for me to come back for my senior season," he said.

"It's the best decision I've ever made. I'm really close to graduating, which I really want to do."

Along the way, Black might just find himself in the right place at the right time for some well-deserved glamour and fame.

— Dave Moormann

TOP CENTERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Kris O'Dowd**	Jr.	USC
	Being named first-time All-Pac-10 as sophomore put him in elite company.		
2.	**John Estes**	Sr.	Hawaii
	Football family includes uncle Rockne Freitas, who played 11 NFL seasons.		
3.	**Stefen Wisniewski**	Jr.	Penn State
	Smart dude will easily handle transition from being a standout guard.		
4.	**Ryan Pugh**	Jr.	Auburn
	Moved around last season, and played his best in the biggest games.		
5.	**Ryan McMahon**	Jr.	Florida State
	Reason No. 2 to think 'Noles will blast people (see guards for reason No. 1).		
6.	**Ben Jones**	So.	Georgia
	Future's so bright for a kid who played so well last year as a true freshman.		
7.	**Josh McNeil**	Sr.	Tennessee
	Senior leader has made 35 consecutive starts for the Vols.		
8.	**Chris Hall**	Sr.	Texas
	Settled in to center last season after starting at all five spots in 2007.		

TOP GUARDS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Rodney Hudson**	Jr.	Florida State
	Top reason to think that the 'Noles finally will blast someone on offense.		
2.	**Mike Johnson**	Sr.	Alabama
	Becomes the line leader after departures of Andre Smith, Antoine Caldwell.		
3.	**Thomas Austin**	Sr.	Clemson
	Second-team All-ACC last season; can also play center on now-deep OL.		
4.	**Sergio Render**	Sr.	Virginia Tech
	Should be ready to go in fall after offseason shoulder surgery.		
5.	**Clint Boling**	Jr.	Georgia
	Mr. Versatility fits at guard if Trinton Sturdivant is back 100 percent.		
6.	**Pouncey Twins**	Jrs.	Florida
	Why split them? Mike, Maurkice identical interior forces for the Gators.		
7.	**Cord Howard**	Sr.	Georgia Tech
	No problem blocking in Paul Johnson's triple-option offense.		
8.	**Jeff Byers**	Sr.	USC
	Sixth-year senior will be blocking for his fourth full-time starting QB.		

TOP TACKLES

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Russell Okung**	Sr.	Oklahoma State
	OSU has led the Big 12 in rushing in each of his three seasons as a starter.		
2.	**Ciron Black**	Sr.	LSU
	Now becomes the big name with the big game on LSU's offensive line.		
3.	**Trent Williams**	Sr.	Oklahoma
	Every rebuilding line should be so lucky to have a cornerstone like this.		
4.	**Adam Ulatoski**	Sr.	Texas
	Did you know: He was UT's 11th first-team all-league OL this decade.		
5.	**Brandon Carter**	Sr.	Texas Tech
	All-Big 12 player making the move from guard to left tackle.		
6.	**Zane Beadles**	Sr.	Utah
	Fourth-year starter is the force behind a powerful Utah attack.		
7.	**Sam Young**	Sr.	Notre Dame
	Young and the Irish O-line should be all grown up this season.		
8.	**John Jerry**	Sr.	Ole Miss
	After Michael Oher, another first-round O-lineman for Ole Miss?		

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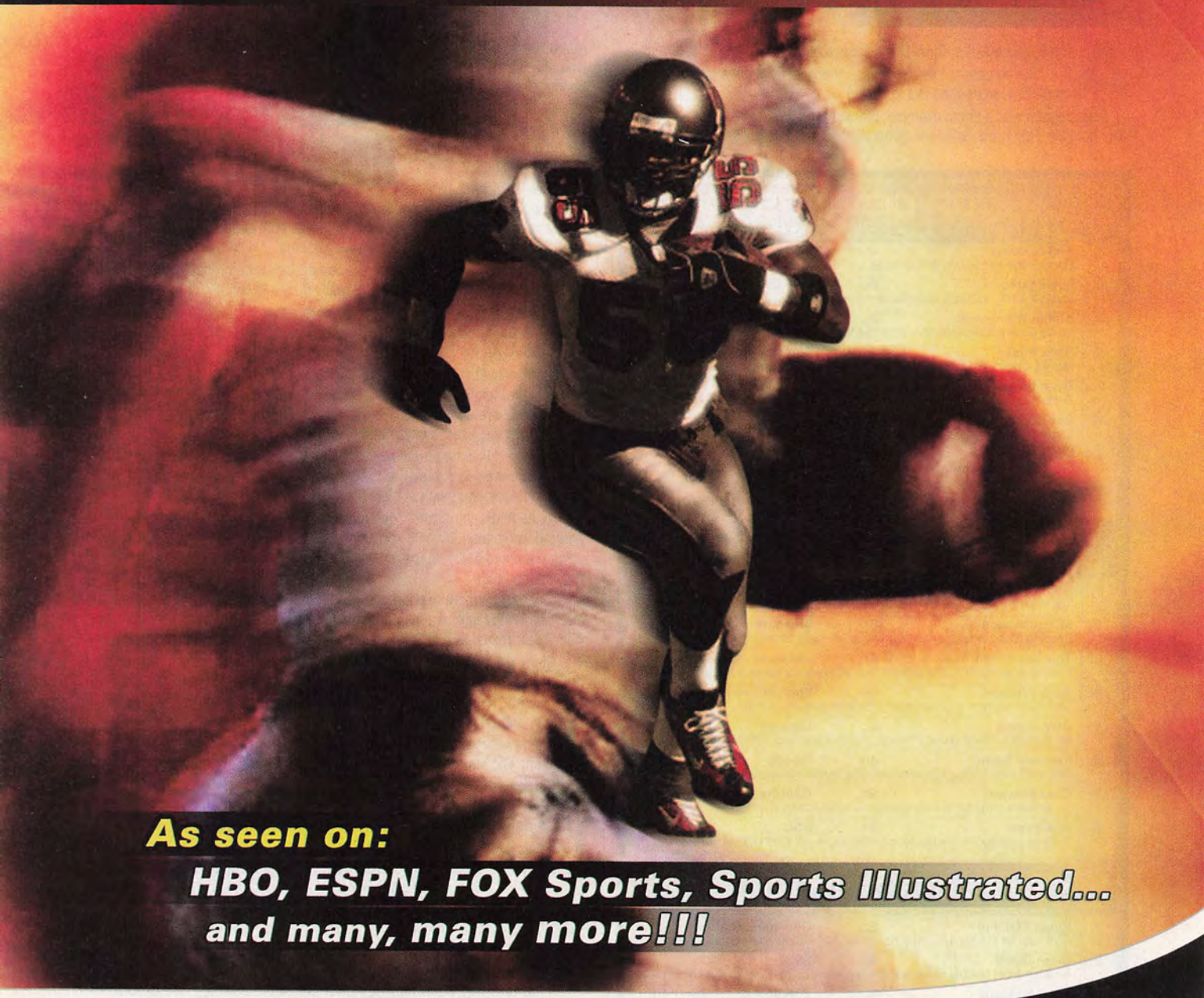

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PLAYER RATINGS

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN

Keeping it Real, McCoy Leads the Way

GERALD McCOY

Photo by John Williamson

In July 2007, two months before he would play his first game at Oklahoma, defensive tackle Gerald McCoy lost the person who taught him what it meant to be a leader.

Patricia McCoy, Gerald's mother, died unexpectedly from a blood-clot complication at age 53.

Later that same day, McCoy stood in front of his teammates and told them about his mom. How she cared about the team. And how they were going to persevere as a team.

From that moment, McCoy became the team's heart ... a true spiritual leader.

"My mother always raised me to be the head and not the tail," McCoy said. "That's what I try and do in the locker room and outside of the locker room."

His teammates and coaches have noticed.

Last year, McCoy became one of the rare sophomores in Sooner history to be voted captain.

"He has a presence. When he walks in the room, you know he's there," said linebacker Ryan Reynolds. "The way he works, goes about things, he's always trying to get everyone excited. He'll always have your back and he has a great personality and everyone on the team likes him."

In 2008, McCoy was named to the Allstate American Football Coaches Association Good Works Team, and this year, he was nominated to the watch list for the 2009 Lott Trophy, which goes to the defensive player with the biggest impact on and off the field.

Last summer, McCoy was elected president of OU's Fellowship of Christian Athletes chapter, which blossomed under his leadership.

And during the offseason, he can often be found at other OU sporting events, like basketball and volleyball, cheering his heart out for his fellow student-athletes.

"He's just a prince of a guy, a guy who is a leader in every part of his life," coach Bob Stoops said. "Even as a young guy, he'll chime up if he has something to say, if he feels something ought to be different.

"And everyone listens because of how hard he works and how respected he is."

As much as McCoy does off the field, his impact on the field is just as impressive.

Despite playing with a heavy heart following the loss of his mom, McCoy was named the Big 12 Defensive Freshman of the Year in 2007 after recording 19 tackles and two sacks.

Last season, the 6-4, 295-pound McCoy progressed further, earning first-team All-Big 12 honors after recording 30 tackles, 11 for loss, and 6.5 sacks.

Most believe he'll be a high first-round NFL Draft pick in 2010, or, if he stays for his senior season, in 2011.

For now, though, McCoy remains focused on the goals of 2009.

Heading into this season, the way he helps lead a Sooner defense that was suspect at times last year will go a long way in determining if OU can four-peat as Big 12 champs and make it back to the BCS National Championship Game.

The Sooners return nine starters from last year's defense, including the entire front seven and both cornerbacks.

But despite holding Texas Tech, Missouri and Florida to season scoring lows to close the season, the Sooners still ranked 58th in the nation in scoring defense.

"We know the roles we have to do this year and we're ready to do it," McCoy said. "In my eyes, I feel we can have the No. 1 defense in the country."

Whether the OU defense reaches that level depends significantly on McCoy elevating his game even more, up to the level of past Sooner defensive line greats like Lee Roy Selmon, Tony Casillas and Tommie Harris, all Lombardi Award winners.

"He has a chance to be great," Stoops said. "He has that kind of ability. He has that kind of work ethic and attitude. He's working his way to it."

— Jake Trotter

TOP DEFENSIVE ENDS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Jerry Hughes**	Sr.	TCU
	Can't get much better than his 2008: 15 sacks and six forced fumbles.		
2.	**George Selvie**	Sr.	South Florida
	Stats dipped last season (darn those double teams) but has 25.5 sacks.		
3.	**Jermaine Cunningham**	Sr.	Florida
	Any better bookends than Cunningham and Carlos Dunlap?		
4.	**Antonio Coleman**	Sr.	Auburn
	A rare bright spot for the Tigers last season, and a potential first-rounder.		
5.	**Sergio Kindle**	Sr.	Texas
	Sack man moves on down from OLB to Brian Orakpo's former DE spot.		
6.	**Greg Hardy**	Sr.	Ole Miss
	Has all the tools; needs right combination of health and attitude.		
7.	**Corey Wootton**	Sr.	Northwestern
	First-team All-Big Ten performer back to lead veteran Wildcat defense.		
8.	**Jammie Kirlew**	Sr.	Indiana
	Kirlew and Greg Middleton are best pair of non-SEC defensive ends.		
9.	**Carlos Dunlap**	Jr.	Florida
	The defensive Most Valuable Player of last season's national title game.		
10.	**Brandon Graham**	Sr.	Michigan
	Chosen the Michigan MVP after collecting 10 sacks last season.		
11.	**Jason Worilds**	Jr.	Virginia Tech
	Eight sacks, 18.5 tackles for loss and 21 quarterback hurries in 2008.		
12.	**Greg Romeus**	Jr.	Pittsburgh
	His speed off the edge helps give Pitt the best DL in the Big East.		

TOP DEFENSIVE TACKLES

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Gerald McCoy**	Jr.	Oklahoma
	With McCoy right in the middle, no questions at all about OU's front.		
2.	**Terrence Cody**	Sr.	Alabama
	Run-stuffing "Mount" Cody hopes to add some pass rush to his game.		
3.	**Ndamukong Suh**	Sr.	Nebraska
	First Huskers' interior lineman since 1973 to lead team in tackles (76).		
4.	**Arthur Jones**	Sr.	Syracuse
	His 13 tackles for loss last season give him 31.5 for his career.		
5.	**Vince Oghobaase**	Sr.	Duke
	Six sacks in '08 suggest he's more than 300-pound immovable object.		
6.	**Jared Odrick**	Sr.	Penn State
	All-Big Ten player says he wants to play "more violent.' Alrighty then.		
7.	**Dan Williams**	Sr.	Tennessee
	He and end Chris Walker lead a good, albeit thin, Vols defensive line.		
8.	**Geno Atkins**	Sr.	Georgia
	Won't be easy to run on Atkins and DT Jeff Owens, returning from injury.		
9.	**Brian Price**	Jr.	UCLA
	UCLA's defense will be good, and Price (14 TFLs) is a big reason why.		
10.	**Malcolm Sheppard**	Sr.	Arkansas
	Watch out: Bobby Petrino "kind of turned him loose" in the spring.		
11.	**Marvin Austin**	Jr.	North Carolina
	Unquestioned ability ... though still waiting for the big-time production.		
12.	**Colby Whitlock**	Jr.	Texas Tech
	Tech's line lost some pass-rushing fever, but Whitlock is solid inside.		

Spikes Returns to Follow his Heart

The man most responsible for Brandon Spikes' decision to return to Florida for his senior season is sitting in a North Carolina prison.

His name is Breyon Middlebrooks and he is in the Maury Correctional Institute serving life without parole from a first-degree murder conviction stemming from a 2001 drug deal.

Why did a convicted murderer's opinion carry so much weight with Spikes?

TOP INSIDE LINEBACKERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Brandon Spikes**	Sr.	Florida
	His return to the defense was as important as Tim Tebow's to the offense.		
2.	**Rolando McClain**	Jr.	Alabama
	Comfortable in the opposing backfield (17 TFLs) and in secondary (3 INTs).		
3.	**Greg Jones**	Jr.	Michigan State
	Fierce run-stopper will play the middle full time after 127 tackles in '08.		
4.	**Joe Pawelek**	Sr.	Baylor
	Long-running hit show in Bears defense — 313 tackles, eight interceptions.		
5.	**Sean Lee**	Sr.	Penn State
	Might have been at top of the list if not for coming back from ACL injury.		
6.	**Pat Angerer**	Sr.	Iowa
	Does it all for Hawkeyes, like Chad Greenway did a few years ago.		
7.	**Micah Johnson**	Sr.	Kentucky
	He will nicely fill out the uniform at the next level; All-SEC last season.		
8.	**Quan Sturdivant**	Jr.	North Carolina
	Will be roaming the middle after posting 122 stops from the outside.		
9.	**Reggie Carter**	Sr.	UCLA
	Hey, look, USC doesn't have all the good LBs in Los Angeles.		
10.	**Obi Ezeh**	Jr.	Michigan
	Ezeh adds star power to UM's defense, had a team-high 98 tackles in '08.		
11.	**Scott Lutrus**	Jr.	UConn
	Finished third last season in the Big East with 106 tackles.		
12.	**Jamar Chaney**	Sr.	Mississippi State
	Coming back off medical redshirt; led team in tackles in 2007.		

TOP OUTSIDE LINEBACKERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Mark Herzlich**	Sr.	Boston College
	Beware the eye black: He looks good, plays even better (110 stops, 6 INTs.)		
2.	**Sean Weatherspoon**	Sr.	Missouri
	Piled up 155 tackles last season, including 18.5 for loss.		
3.	**Eric Norwood**	Sr.	South Carolina
	Has 22 career sacks, and will see a lot of time at defensive end.		
4.	**Rennie Curran**	Jr.	Georgia
	Says he's only 5-8, but when has he come up short in a big game?		
5.	**Navorro Bowman**	Jr.	Penn State
	All-Big Ten linebacker just needs to stay a little cleaner off the field.		
6.	**Travis Lewis**	So.	Oklahoma
	What's not to love? Best Oklahoma freshman linebacker ... ever?		
7.	**Rico McCoy**	Sr.	Tennessee
	Second-team All-SEC last season in a fabulous league for linebackers.		
8.	**Dekoda Watson**	Sr.	Florida State
	Super athlete missed spring recovering from Tommy John surgery.		
9.	**Andre Sexton**	Sr.	Oklahoma State
	Hope for a better OSU defense starts with Sexton (100 tackles last year).		
10.	**Keenan Clayton**	Sr.	Oklahoma
	Breakout 2008 season included 10 TFLs, six forced fumbles.		
11.	**Roddrick Muckelroy**	Sr.	Texas
	Came up big vs. OU last season: 16 tackles, a PBU and forced fumble.		
12.	**Nate Irving**	Jr.	NC State
	Injuries, so-so team, kept Irving from getting the attention he deserves.		

Photo by Joe Robbins

BRANDON SPIKES

Like most people, Spikes values what his older brother thinks.

"There's not a day that goes by that I don't think of him," said Spikes, who talks to his brother as frequently as he can. "He's kind of like motivation for me being able to take care of my family."

The 28-year-old Middlebrooks told his baby brother to take care of himself first.

"He just wanted me to follow my heart," Spikes said. "He didn't want me to make any decisions on his behalf or what he did in the past.

"... When he told me that, it kind of helped me with my decision."

Middlebrooks' life as an inmate gnaws at Spikes. He wants to use the money he would receive from his first NFL contract to hire an attorney to help his brother, whom he believes was wrongly convicted.

"It is no place for a human," Spikes said. "You're locked in a cage, kind of like a dog."

That's why he considered leaving after a junior season in which he led the Gators in tackles (93) and picked off four passes, returning two for touchdowns. He was selected to the Associated Press All-America team.

Spikes would have gotten a pretty good signing bonus, too. He was — and is — ranked as college football's best middle linebacker prospect.

Instead, he followed quarterback Tim Tebow's example and decided to come back for a chance to win a second consecutive national title and third in four years. Spikes had said several times that Tebow's decision would heavily influence his. The two met on a recruiting trip to Alabama and are close friends, and Spikes has said the reason he went to Florida was to play with Tebow.

"It's definitely a dream," Spikes said of winning a third title. "We've got a chance. We've got our whole defense back. You win championships with the defense, so we've got a great chance of doing it."

Nobody is more important to UF's defense than Spikes. It's more than just making calls and tackles. Spikes is the unit's emotional leader and the barometer for how well it plays. If he plays well, the defense does. If he doesn't ... well, that hasn't happened very often.

"I feel like my game is to make the big play," Spikes said. "I tell guys on our team all the time, 'Don't just be on the field wasting snaps. Do something. Be accountable. Be a game-changer.'"

Spikes' preparation is a big reason he makes big plays. Defensive coordinator Charlie Strong uses the SEC Championship game to make that point. Alabama used a running play in the first half that the Gators hadn't seen on film, and Spikes was a little steamed when the defense got off the field.

"He comes to the sideline and he's like, 'Coach, you never showed us that play. I've never seen that play,'" Strong said.

"I said, 'You know, sometimes you have to adjust.' They had not run that play, but he was smart enough to say, 'Hey, we've not seen that play.'"

There's no way Spikes would have missed it if the Crimson Tide had run it before. He watches more film than any UF defensive player.

"When you get on the plane to go play an away game, some guys are playing their (video) games or listening to music," UF coach Urban Meyer said. "Brandon Spikes sets up a laptop with the video from the opponent and watches it the entire time. His maturity level is off the charts."

— Michael DiRocco

PLAYER RATINGS

DEFENSIVE BACKS

New Role in New Defense Suits Berry Well

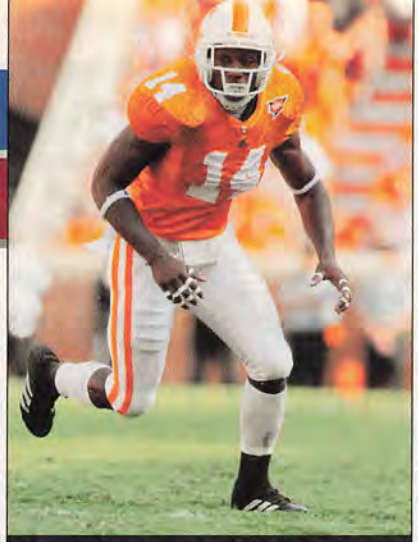

Photo by R.D. Moore

ERIC BERRY

When Lane Kiffin was hired as Tennessee's coach, he declared all jobs were open.

When a Tennessee fan asked about All-American safety Eric Berry, Kiffin called an audible.

"Twenty one jobs are open," Kiffin said.

You don't have to be a $2 million coach, or a veteran NFL scout, to recognize Berry's talents. Last season, Berry tied for the national lead with seven interceptions. He set SEC records for interception return yards (265) in a season and career (487), and he's within 14 yards of the NCAA mark for interception return yards.

The past two years, Berry was a roaming safety in Tennessee's defensive scheme. Now, he's in the Tampa 2, whose architect, Monte Kiffin, is the Vols' new defensive coordinator.

Berry (5-11, 203) expects to play the "John Lynch" role in the new system, a hard-hitting safety viciously delivering hits and calculating just the right moment to pick off passes.

Unfortunately for Berry, he had offseason shoulder surgery that prevented him from springtime contact. He's had to learn the system in non-contact drills and in the film room.

"I believe this scheme suits me," Berry said. "I like to be in the box a lot. I like to cover. I like to blitz. It pretty much fits my personality as a player."

Kiffin can't wait to get Berry on the field.

"He's got a natural feel for the ball," Kiffin said. "He's got great instincts. He'll tackle. He will play physical. He plays with enthusiasm.

"He's very, very smart. He's picked up the system."

The veteran Kiffin knows a thing or two about NFL skills, and he's convinced Berry will be a high draft choice whenever the junior decides to turn pro.

"Some athletes are fast or good hitters or smart or very instinctive or have a great attitude," Kiffin said. "It sounds like I'm exaggerating, but he's got the whole package."

Kiffin was reluctant to compare Berry to other players he has coached. But the defensive guru was certain of one thing:

"Eric Berry is a great player and a great leader," he said. "We're fortunate to have him."

Berry, the SEC's Defensive Player of the Year in 2008, was like a caged pup staring at a bowl of food beyond his reach during spring scrimmages.

"It killed me," Berry said. "They had trainers on the sideline keeping an eye on me because they knew I might try to push it a little bit. They had to calm me down now and then."

Berry, like his teammates, is eager to get rid of the taste of a 5-7 season. And he's eager to learn as much football as he can from Monte Kiffin.

"He's like the Google of football," Berry said. "You ask him anything and he explains it very well. He's a great teacher, besides knowing a lot of football.

"Look at his rap sheet. He's got a Super Bowl championship. He's coached the greatest and he's got the greatest scheme. He knows what he's doing, so I'm going to just do what he says."

Berry played several shotgun snaps at quarterback last season in the "Wildcat" package. He carried seven times for 44 yards. But Lane Kiffin said he plans to keep Berry exclusively on defense this season.

Berry welcomed the comment from Lane Kiffin that all jobs are open.

"I'm going to stay humble regardless, but it's a reminder that I've got to keep going out there and keep working," Berry said. "It's added pressure to keep performing.

"That's how it is in the league (NFL), so, might as well get used to it now."

— Jimmy Hyams

TOP CORNERBACKS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Trevard Lindley**	Sr.	Kentucky
	Will be a four-year starter; has nine career INTs and 34 pass breakups.		
2.	**Syd'Quan Thompson**	Sr.	Cal
	Come a long, long way since disastrous 2006 debut against Tennessee.		
3.	**Joe Haden**	Jr.	Florida
	Superior speed and skill, and he can still learn more about coverage.		
4.	**Kyle Wilson**	Sr.	Boise State
	No Boise State player drafted in 2008 ... because Wilson stayed in school.		
5.	**Alterraun Verner**	Sr.	UCLA
	An aggressive corner who doesn't mind taking chances (18 PBUs in 2008).		
6.	**Janoris Jenkins**	So.	Florida
	Coaches raved about his rapid growth during his freshman year as starter.		
7.	**Javier Arenas**	Sr.	Alabama
	Puts his speed and quick feet to work to compensate for 5-9 height.		
8.	**Donovan Warren**	Jr.	Michigan
	Not a super sophomore year, but that's the kind of season it was for UM.		
9.	**Patrick Robinson**	Sr.	Florida State
	Looked great in spring, and has seven career interceptions.		
10.	**Ras-I Dowling**	Jr.	Virginia
	At 6-2 (and productive), he's one of the best CBs in junior draft class.		
11.	**Walter Thurmond**	Sr.	Oregon
	Ducks lost two second-round DBs, so QBs should steer clear of Thurmond.		
12.	**Myron Lewis**	Sr.	Vanderbilt
	Matching totals of five sacks and five interceptions as a junior.		

TOP SAFETIES

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Taylor Mays**	Sr.	USC
	Stats don't even begin to tell the story of how he changes game plans.		
2.	**Eric Berry**	Jr.	Tennessee
	SEC Defensive Player of the Year as a sophomore? Now that's special.		
3.	**Morgan Burnett**	Jr.	Georgia Tech
	Flies around the field so much he made seven interceptions last year.		
4.	**Darrell Stuckey**	Sr.	Kansas
	All-league SS (98 stops, five INTs) a big reason why KU should win North.		
5.	**Chad Jones**	Jr.	LSU
	Spring hinted at a breakout season for ultra-athletic free safety.		
6.	**Jordan Lake**	Sr.	Baylor
	Free safety is one of the most feared hitters in the Big 12.		
7.	**Ahmad Black**	Jr.	Florida
	Recorded seven interceptions from his strong safety spot last season.		
8.	**Barry Church**	Sr.	Toledo
	Trying to go 4-for-4 in earning first-team All-MAC honors.		
9.	**Kam Chancellor**	Sr.	Virginia Tech
	With Macho Harris gone, he's the leader in ACC's best secondary.		
10.	**Major Wright**	Jr.	Florida
	Nine tackles and a goal-line interception in BCS Championship Game.		
11.	**Kurt Coleman**	Sr.	Ohio State
	Not a big strong safety, but usually gets himself in the middle of the action.		
12.	**Reshad Jones**	Jr.	Georgia
	One of five INTs came in final seconds to preserve a win over S. Carolina.		

PLAYER RATINGS

ALL PURPOSE

Big Play Every Play, that's Arenas' Goal

Ask Javier Arenas what he does best, and he just laughs.

The Tampa native believes everything he does, he does best.

Defensive back? He started every Alabama game last year at corner, recording 63 tackles, with two sacks, and an interception that he returned 63 yards for a touchdown. He earned second-team All-SEC honors in a league loaded with excellent defensive backs.

JAVIER ARENAS

Photo by R.D. Moore

Punt returner? Arenas is the school's leader in punt return yards in a game, season and career, as well as the NCAA's active leader in all three categories going into his senior season.

Kick returner? Arenas averaged 23.6 yards on kickoff returns last year, after averaging 24.3 and 19.1 yards the two previous years.

"There's nobody that tries harder and wants to do better than Javy," said Alabama head coach Nick Saban.

If anything, Arenas has been guilty of trying too hard. He had four fumbles last year on kick returns because he was trying to squeeze out an extra yard or two. But he always seems to come right back and make up for a mistake with a big play.

"Those (kind of) guys you need to support and get them right back on the field so they can focus on the next play," Saban said.

For a player as busy as Arenas, there isn't much time between plays to sulk.

He's received most of his attention for his punt returns. His 41 punt returns last year led the nation, as did his 650 yards. His 15.86 yards per return ranked sixth.

Arenas' three returns for touchdowns — covering 87, 80, and 73 yards — led the Southeastern Conference and gave him a school-record six for his career.

But he's just as proud of his ability as a defensive back, where he has become a lock-down cover corner that opposing teams don't challenge.

"Yeah, I'm confident," Arenas said. "I go out there and you tell me I'm covering a guy who's 6 (foot) 36 (inches) — if there is such a thing — and I'll tell you I can lock him down. I can cover the dude. I believe that now."

He's done it with a boundless enthusiasm that causes him to work non-stop to get better. In spring practice, when veterans have been known to take it easy, Arenas keeps winning awards like the "Jerry Duncan I Like to Practice" Award last year, or the "Sylvester Croom Commitment to Excellence" Award in 2009.

Does he do too much?

"Man, that's negative thinking," Arenas said. "This is what I do. And I love it. Every play either makes you worse or makes you better. You learn (from mistakes) and it makes you a stronger person."

Last September, Arenas boldly declared he would score every time he touched the ball. OK, he knew it wasn't going to happen. But that's not a bad brand of confidence when you're often the smallest player on the field (5-9, 198 pounds).

"It's about confidence," he said. "David beat Goliath. An average-sized dude came to try and test him. How do you think he felt? 'After I beat this dude (Goliath) and now you want to come along?'

"But when you do something that catastrophic, it shows you what you're capable of. You realize, 'Hey, I can really do this.' And it makes you more confident than ever."

Now, the question is, will David get a chance to slay more Goliaths? Or will opposing teams learn their lesson and continue to kick away from him, as they started doing at the end of last season.

"Then I'll find another way," Arenas said. "That's what makes a person special."

— Ray Melick

TOP KICKERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Kai Forbath**	Jr.	UCLA
	Love the leg: He's 6 of 6 in his career from 50-plus yards.		
2.	**Matt Bosher**	Jr.	Miami
	Team MVP last season for kicking (18 of 20 FGs) and punting.		
3.	**Thomas Weber**	Jr.	Arizona State
	2007 Groza winner added punting duties in 2008 (but he's a better PK).		
4.	**Philip Welch**	So.	Wisconsin
	Badgers set here for a while after he made 20 of 24 FGs ... with range.		
5.	**Brett Swenson**	Sr.	Michigan State
	Proven performer with 52 career field goals.		
6.	**Joshua Shene**	Sr.	Ole Miss
	All-SEC kicker has a career accuracy mark of 76.4 percent (42 of 55).		
7.	**Josh Arauco**	Sr.	Arkansas State
	Began last season by making 15 consecutive field goals.		
8.	**Leigh Tiffin**	Sr.	Alabama
	Opportunity (45 FGs in past two years) and strong leg make him valuable.		

TOP PUNTERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Derek Epperson**	Jr.	Baylor
	Following nicely in the kicking shoes of Daniel Sepulveda.		
2.	**Zoltan Mesko**	Sr.	Michigan
	Helped Wolverines rank fifth in net punting, and dangerous on fakes.		
3.	**Bryan Anger**	So.	Cal
	Super freshman year, combining booming punts with nice touch.		
4.	**Chas Henry**	Jr.	Florida
	Gators have the SEC's top punter, too? Hardly seems fair.		
5.	**Keenyn Crier**	Jr.	Arizona
	Two top 15 finishes in punting average in his first two seasons.		
6.	**Travis Baltz**	Jr.	Maryland
	All-ACC last season when Maryland gave up just 83 yards on 61 punts.		
7.	**Ross Thevenot**	Sr.	Tulane
	Finished second nationally last season with a 45.8-yard average.		
8.	**Jeremy Boone**	Sr.	Penn State
	All-Big Ten in 2007; Penn State was 11th nationally in net punting in '08.		

TOP ALL PURPOSE

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Javier Arenas**	Sr.	Alabama
	Six punt returns for TDs, and is NCAA active leader in punt return yards.		
2.	**C.J. Spiller**	Sr.	Clemson
	Rushes, catches, kick returns, punt returns ... it's always go-time.		
3.	**Brandon James**	Sr.	Florida
	More of just a pure return specialist ... but he's NFL quality in that regard.		
4.	**Dez Bryant**	Jr.	Oklahoma State
	All those receiving yards, plus two punt returns for touchdowns last year.		
5.	**Dexter McCluster**	Sr.	Ole Miss
	No returns, but nobody balances running and receiving like he does.		
6.	**DeMarco Murray**	Jr.	Oklahoma
	Receiving and kick return skills has tailback on this list, too.		
7.	**Perrish Cox**	Sr.	Oklahoma State
	Four career kick return TDs, and getting pretty darn good at cornerback.		
8.	**Trindon Holiday**	Sr.	LSU
	Can't leave off arguably the nation's fastest football player.		

UNIT RANKINGS
OFFENSE

TOP 10 BACKFIELDS

1. OKLAHOMA

This is just like projecting the Heisman race. It's that close. For the Heisman, we're going with Florida's Tim Tebow, but this is about the whole backfield — quarterback, running back and depth — so the tables turn to Oklahoma's favor.

Heisman-winning quarterback Sam Bradford and a pair of 1,000-yards backs — Chris Brown and DeMarco Murray — that's enough to even topple Tebow. Very capable Mossis Madu can help out with the ball-carrying in a pinch, too, although he spent spring in receiver mode in order to maximize the weapons at Bradford's disposal.

The question that will remain until the first game, and perhaps beyond, is about the Sooners' new-look offensive line. Maybe the backfield was just being propped up last season on the strong shoulders of that super line.

Nah ... didn't think so.

2. FLORIDA

When the Gators won the national title in 2006, coach Urban Meyer still had one lament. He didn't have an every-down back who could be tough between the tackles yet out-run defenders to the corner. This time around, after the 2008 title, the Gators are getting close to Meyer's wish.

Florida's top two rushers last season were a quarterback (Tim Tebow) and a receiver (Percy Harvin), but Meyer liked his tailbacks enough in the spring to talk about playing some in the I-formation.

Speedsters Jeff Demps and Chris Rainey each averaged 7.8 yards per carry last season, and Emmanuel Moody averaged 7.2 yards per rush. That's not quite Oklahoma-good back there, but it ain't bad, either.

3. OKLAHOMA STATE

What, you were expecting Texas here? The Cowboys have a significant edge at running back with Kendall Hunter, who just so happened to rush for 161 yards against the Longhorns last season.

Hunter averaged 119.6 yards per game and 6.45 yards per carry last season in an offense that gets bonus points for being freakishly balanced. Led by quarterback Zac Robinson, the Cowboys rushed for an average of 245.46 yards last season and passed for 242.23.

A year earlier, those numbers matched almost exactly — 243.15 yards per game.

4. TEXAS

Heisman wannabe Colt McCoy does his fair share in the running game — and the passing game, and the leadership game — but the tailbacks lack that certain sizzle of an Austin summer day. Say this, Texas has depth and solid candidates. Fozzie Whittaker, Vondrell McGee and short-yardage option Cody Johnson are good backs, but they will have to run a little faster and a little longer to be considered much more than pedestrian.

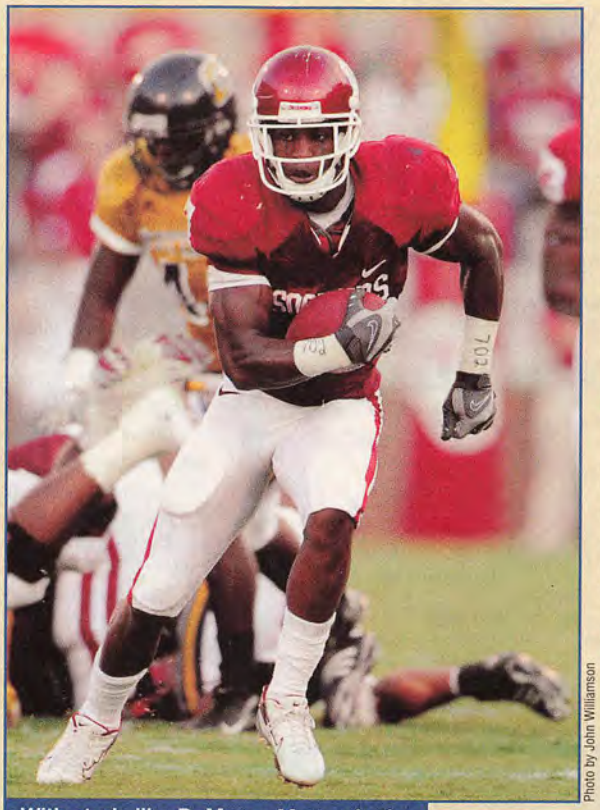

Photo by John Williamson

With studs like DeMarco Murray in the backfield, Oklahoma's Sam Bradford won't have to put up Heisman-winning numbers this year, but he probably still will.

5. OREGON

Junior college transfer Jeremiah Masoli came from way back on the quarterback depth chart last season, and the Ducks didn't know what they had until injuries hit. Masoli didn't have great passing numbers — he seemed to make all the big throws, though — but he played the read-option like a grand master. LeGarrette Blount is a big back with breakaway speed, averaging 7.31 yards per carry and scoring 17 touchdowns last season — as a part-timer. He's the main man now.

6. HOUSTON

Junior quarterback Case Keenum passed for 5,020 yards, with 44 touchdowns and 11 interceptions, last season. Bryce Beall, a freshman who didn't play much in the first three games, went off for 1,247 yards and 13 TDs once he got the chance. Houston doesn't expect more of the same; it expects to be better and win Conference USA. How 'bout that game at Oklahoma State? First to 60 wins? Seventy?

7. OLE MISS

Junior quarterback Jevan Snead knows his way around the SEC now, receiver Dexter McCluster likes to spend time in the backfield and take shotgun snaps, and the Rebels return their top four running backs. Sophomore Brandon Bolden is expected to break out from that pack.

8. PENN STATE

The Nittany Lions have the best experienced quarterback in the Big Ten (senior Daryll Clark) and they have the best running back of any age — junior Evan Royster. Clark passed for 2,592 yards last season; Royster ran up 1,236 yards.

9. BYU

The combination of quarterback Max Hall and running back Harvey Unga returns for its third season. Hall doesn't have much behind him, but the tailback position will be deeper.

10. GEORGIA TECH

Never mind Josh Nesbitt's passing numbers. He has a big arm, even though he's mostly there to run and make good decisions. He almost can't go wrong because the Jackets are overflowing with triple-option runners, none finer than Jonathan Dwyer.

TOP 10 RECEIVERS

1. KANSAS

There was a significant talent drain across the country among pass catchers — including early entries Michael Crabtree, James Casey, Jeremy Maclin, Austin Collie and Kenny Britt — but Kansas held on to two of the most productive.

Two of the top seven returning receivers in the country are Jayhawks, and they have complementary skills. Dezmon Briscoe (92 catches, 1,407 yards, 15 touchdowns) is the big-play guy who can scat through the secondary. Kerry Meier (97 catches, 1,045 yards, eight TDs) is the dependable, get-a-first-down guy.

Emerging wideout Johnathan Wilson makes it a triple-threat of targets for quarterback Todd Reesing.

2. ILLINOIS

Arrelious Benn caught 67 passes for 1,055 yards last season, and the Illini go deep here. They added Florida transfer Jarred Fayson to the mix while bringing back senior Jeff Cumberland and tight end Michael Hoomanawanui.

Plus, coach Ron Zook has been recruiting like a mad man (naturally), so underclassmen should be ready to emerge. Watch for freshman receiver Terry Hawthorne, the national No. 58 prospect, according to Rivals.com.

3. LSU

Brandon LaFell, with the desired mix of size and speed, enters the season as perhaps the No. 1 senior wideout for the 2010 NFL Draft. Tight end Richard Dickson is a durable target. Speed comes with Terrance Toliver and Trindon Holliday. The nation's No. 2 overall recruit, Rueben Randle, arrives in the fall.

4. NOTRE DAME

Finally, some Notre Dame playmaking. Golden Tate and Michael Floyd can go deep and operate in space. They combined last season for 106 receptions for 1,799 yards — almost 17 yards per catch. Former starters Duval Kamara and Robby Parris are backups. Sophomore Kyle Rudolph is one of the nation's best young tight ends.

5. TEXAS

Sixth-year senior Jordan Shipley has great hands and speed and has a certain telepathy with quarterback Colt McCoy. Malcolm Williams is a deep threat who can do more now that Quan Cosby is gone. Dan Buckner and Brandon Collins are fine backup options.

6. USC

Damian Williams is the best receiver in the Pac-10 (granted, it's a down year for the league there) and Ronald Johnson has game-breaking speed. The battle for the third receiver spot — David Ausberry, Jordan Cameron, Brice Butler, Travon Patterson — is among guys who came from the high branches of the recruiting tree.

7. MEMPHIS

Senior Duke Calhoun, with 144 catches for 2,058 yards, is within quick striking distance of school records in both categories. Even so, he will have to hold off 6-8 senior Carlos Singleton, who enters the season with 125 catches for 1,858 yards.

8. MICHIGAN

Starting slot Martavious Odoms returns, as do wideouts Greg Mathews and Darryl Stonum. Spring brought heightened competition, as Terrence Robinson (returning from knee injury), Junior Hemingway (returning from mono) and 2008 scout teamer Roy Roundtree carved out roles.

9. SMU

Senior Emmanuel Sanders and junior Aldrick Robinson, despite their sub-6-foot stature, are on NFL draft boards and should only improve their numbers in the second year under June Jones. Those combined numbers from 2008: 126 catches for 2,005 yards and 20 touchdowns.

10. ALABAMA

Superstar Julio Jones counts for a lot, and the Tide has a solid rotation around him of Marquis Maze, Darius Hanks and Mike McCoy.

TOP 10 OFFENSIVE LINES

1. USC

It's better to have an inexperienced quarterback with a veteran line than the other way around. So the Trojans have that going for them. The starting line returns, as do two others with significant starting experience, making this a highly competitive situation. Just the way coach Pete Carroll likes it.

Junior center Kris O'Dowd earned All-Pac-10 honors as a sophomore, and guard Jeff Byers enters his sixth season while he works on his MBA. Charles Brown is an all-star candidate at left tackle.

All these experienced linemen and a overflowing stable of running backs ... who needs a QB?

2. GEORGIA

Georgia has a full house of experienced linemen who can play multiple positions. The Dawgs return all five starters, and that doesn't count junior tackle Trinton Sturdivant, who missed last season. Standouts include sophomore center Ben Jones and junior guard/tackle Clint Boling ... and there's still room to grow. There are no seniors among the projected starters.

3. TEXAS

Never a weakness, the Longhorns' line should be better than in most years with a veteran group that includes four returning starters, led by *Lindy's* preseason All-American Adam Ulatoski. Texas has had at least one first-team All-Big 12 lineman in 11 consecutive seasons.

4. FLORIDA STATE

Bobby Bowden might actually be able to lean on his offensive line, starring guard Rodney Hudson, the best Seminoles offensive lineman in five years or so. Center Ryan McMahon is one of the best interior linemen in the ACC.

5. RUTGERS

Junior tackle Anthony Davis, headed for a first-round NFL future, leads a line that returns intact. Senior Ryan Blaszczyk could be the best center in the Big East.

6. FLORIDA

Having two new tackles isn't optimum, but spring juggling resulted in starting left guard Carl Johnson moving to left tackle, with center Maurkice Pouncey going to left guard. Twin Mike Pouncey is at right guard. All in all, not a bad way to be.

7. CLEMSON

The Tigers have five returning starters with a combined 119 starts, turning a recent weakness into a strength. Senior guard/center Thomas Austin is one of the best in the ACC, no matter where he lines up.

8. CAL

The NCAA granted left tackle Mike Tepper a sixth year of eligibility, easing Cal's pain over losing All-American center Alex Mack. Tepper, who missed last season, doesn't count among the three returning starters (neither does new center Chris Guarnero, who missed most of last season), so the Bears' situation is better than it appears on paper.

9. IOWA

Prime NFL prospect Bryan Bulaga, a junior, and senior Kyle Calloway return at tackle. They each earned second-team All-Big Ten honors last season. Dan Doering and Dace Richardson, back from injury troubles, could help in a rebuilt interior.

10. LSU

Always strong, LSU might have the SEC's best pair of tackles with preseason All-American Ciron Black and Joseph Barksdale.

USC's opponents will be chasing a new QB this season, but will still have to go through Kris O'Dowd (left) and Jeff Byers to have any shot at getting him.

Photo by Ned Dishman/Getty Images

UNIT RANKINGS DEFENSE

TOP 10 DEFENSIVE LINES

1. FLORIDA

This is when you know you're good: You have the SEC's top returning sack man, and he doesn't even start. Technicality? Yeah. Whatever. Point is, the Gators are two-deep across the board, so junior Carlos Dunlap (9.5 sacks, Defensive MVP of the BCS title game) doesn't have to run onto the field for the first snap.

Florida has all its starting linemen back from a defense that stuffed Oklahoma, and at least three players have the look of high NFL Draft picks — Dunlap, starting end Jermaine Cunningham and junior tackle Lawrence Marsh.

Dunlap is the most freakishly athletic of the group, but it all works together — speed from the outside, push in the middle — and that's why Florida will be among the national elite in sacks and rushing defense.

2. OKLAHOMA

Not much to separate this group from Florida's. Junior defensive tackle Gerald McCoy is the brightest bulb in the set, with mock drafters already penciling him in for 2010 millions. For all the double teams in his life, McCoy has loads of help from tackle Adrian Taylor, and ends Frank Alexander, Jeremy Beal and Auston English.

The ends combined for 16.5 sacks last season, helping the Sooners bring down the quarterback 42 times, the fourth-best total in the nation. Tackle DeMarcus Granger is a big talent who is trying to get back from December back surgery.

3. CLEMSON

The strength of the entire team. Returning ends Ricky Sapp, Kevin Alexander and Da'Quan Bowers are all playmakers with internal compasses to the quarterback. Sapp is coming back from a late-season ACL tear, so that's one worry, but Bowers ramped up the expectations with a big spring following a fine freshman season.

4. ALABAMA

Terrence Cody wants to stay on the field in pass-rushing downs, so his quest was to trim the fat to about 350 pounds. Whether he can move well enough to be a collapse-the-pocket factor remains to be seen. What is certain is that he remains the concrete and steel of Alabama's three-man front, which is one of the nation's best against the run.

5. PITTSBURGH

Junior ends Greg Romeus and Jabaal Sheard are the best bookends in the Big East, combining for 13 sacks last season. Senior Mick Williams, who had 4.5 sacks and 8.5 tackles for loss last season, is one of the league's best tackles.

Photo by Bill Frakes /Sports Illustrated/Getty Images

Wanna mess with these guys? Of course you don't, but Florida opponents will have no choice as the Gators return everybody from their national championship defense.

6. OLE MISS

A great rotation at end — Marcus Tillman, Kentrell Lockett and bundle of talent Greg Hardy — helps give the Rebs another formidable front four after losing big fella Peria Jerry.

7. ARIZONA STATE

Stump your friends with this trivia question: Who is the only player in the country to have double-digit sacks in the past two seasons? Answer: ASU senior end Dexter Davis. Sophomore tackle Lawrence Guy is the real deal. These guys are the Devils' best hope for a bounce-back season.

8. VIRGINIA TECH

The Hokies return five of the top six players from last season's rotation. Defensive end Jason Worilds had a streak of 11 games with at least one tackle for loss, finishing with 18.5.

9. NORTH CAROLINA

The returning starting four of ends E.J. Wilson and Robert Quinn, and tackles Marvin Austin and Cam Thomas, haven't come close to hitting their ceiling yet. As with the rest of the Tar Heels, when they do, you'll see it in the rankings.

10. SOUTH FLORIDA

Three starters return from the nation's 10th-ranked rushing defense, and with end George Selvie there, a sack is always a possibility.

TOP 10 LINEBACKERS

1. ALABAMA

The Tide is set at this position for years. Coach Saban's Carroll-esque recruiting ensures that. For now, the four- and five-star recruits just have to get in line behind Rolando McClain, Dont'a Hightower, Cory Reamer and Brandon Fanney. They're all returning starters from one of the nation's best defenses.

McClain and Hightower were designed in the NFL laboratory. They're 6-4, 250 pounds and don't give up the corner to tailbacks who want to get up field.

McClain's a junior, Hightower a sophomore, and they have the chance to be the highest-rated linebackers from their respective draft classes.

2. FLORIDA

Maybe we should consider this more of a 1A ranking. Middle man Brandon Spikes is the chief enforcer — dare we say the heart and soul of the defense? — and he's flanked by returning starters Brandon Hicks and Ryan Stamper.

Perfectly pleasing depth comes with ex-starters Dustin Doe and A.J. Jones, and coach Urban Meyer said in the spring he was further slicing up the position because redshirt freshman Brendan Beal and early enrolling freshman Jon Bostic just had to play.

3. OKLAHOMA

Travis Lewis was a revelation in '08, earning Big 12 Defensive Freshman of the Year for a thoroughly ridiculous 144-tackle, four-interception debut. The other outside linebacker Keenan Clayton — 10 tackles for loss, six forced fumbles — wasn't half bad. Senior Ryan Reynolds is coming back from an ACL injury to man the middle ... or the Sooners' depth will just take over.

4. PENN STATE

Sean Lee didn't go through contact drills in the spring, but the potential All-American has a chance to be moving just fine in time for fall camp, which will be about 16 months after his ACL injury. He's in the middle of the defense now, and returning All-Big Ten first-teamer Navorro Bowman will be on the outside, assuming he doesn't have any more brush-ups with the law.

5. BOSTON COLLEGE

We're assuming the best here, which means middle linebacker Mike McLaughlin comes back OK for the season after suffering a torn Achilles' before spring ball. McLaughlin and the high-motor Mark Herzlich combined for 199 tackles last season, 25 for loss.

6. MIAMI

Not yet smack-worthy, but back on the rise. Sean Spence was the ACC Defensive Rookie of the Year last season. Senior Darryl Sharpton is a vet in the middle. Senior Colin McCarthy should have a good year. Coach Randy Shannon's star recruits, including sophomore Arthur Brown, might soon be ready.

7. BAYLOR

Senior Joe Pawelek has seemingly been there all decade, and he's the best middle linebacker in the Big 12. Beyond him, Antonio Johnson, Antonio Jones and Earl Patin combined for 195 tackles last season.

8. WEST VIRGINIA

Reed Williams, the team's leading tackler in 2007, returns for a sixth season after losing most of last year due to shoulder problems. The Mountaineers have veterans at every linebacker spot for a defense that was 11th in the country in points allowed.

9. LSU

The Tigers shuffled in the spring, moving strong safety Harry Coleman, who had a team-high 71 tackles last season, to outside linebacker. He joins athletic Kelvin Sheppard and new middle linebacker Jacob Cutrera.

10. NORTH CAROLINA

Quan Sturdivant led the nation with 87 solo tackles, and Bruce Carter (11 tackles for loss, five sacks) was also a special teams terror, blocking five kicks. Coaches will choose from talented young players for the other starting spot.

TOP 10 DEFENSIVE BACKS

1. FLORIDA

There's a trend here. The top defensive line, the kinda co-No. 1 linebackers and now the best secondary. The Gators just need Tim Tebow not to mess it up.

Florida's secondary is dominant. And young. Not a senior among the starters — or most of the backups — and it doesn't matter a bit. Junior corner Joe Haden and sophomore corner Janoris Jenkins have been stars since stepping on campus. Juniors Ahmad Black and Major Wright are among the finest safeties in the nation.

The Gators tied a school record with 26 interceptions and were third nationally in pass efficiency defense.

2. USC

Taylor Mays made a surprising decision to return for his senior season, and the Trojans won't argue. With Mays back at safety — and the NCAA granting combo defensive back Josh Pinkard a sixth season — USC should be its usual ball-hawking self.

3. LSU

New coordinator John Chavis, formerly of Tennessee, inherited safety Chad Jones and cornerback Patrick Peterson, both potential all-stars. Peterson, a sophomore, finished last season with a flourish and carried that momentum through the spring.

4. ALABAMA

Three starters are back, including second-team All-SEC performer Javier Arenas and fellow corner Kareem Jackson. Sophomore Robby Green emerged in spring as the leader to replace free safety Rashad Johnson.

5. VIRGINIA TECH

Senior free safety Kam Chancellor is an imposing figure at 6-4, 226 pounds, and coaches want to see him use his voice more to be a leader and direct traffic. Cornerback Stephan Virgil is coming off a junior season in which he intercepted six passes.

6. CAL

The Bears have the best cornerback combination in the Pac-10 with Syd'Quan Thompson and Darian Hagan, who each broke up 18 passes.

7. TCU

Representing one of the nation's top annual defenses are projected all-league corners Rafael Priest and Nick Sanders, as well as safety Tejay Johnson. Priest and Sanders haven't missed a start in the past three seasons.

8. TENNESSEE

SEC Defensive Player of the Year Eric Berry is surrounded by an athletic supporting cast in a defense now coordinated by longtime NFL assistant Monte Kiffin.

9. NORTHWESTERN

Not a galaxy of stars, but the Wildcats have four returning starters who earned some sort of postseason recognition last season on a much-improved defense. To single out one: senior safety Brad Phillips.

10. BOSTON COLLEGE

The Eagles tied for the national lead with 26 interceptions last season. Paul Anderson, who had six, is gone, but the bulk of the group is back, including safety Wes Davis.

Rolando McClain (left) and Dont'a Hightower are the types of linebackers NFL scouts dream of and the Alabama Crimson Tide actually has.

Photo by Andy Lyons/Getty Images

NATIONAL RECRUITING

By Mike Farrell
Rivals.com

1 Alabama

THE PARTICULARS: QB-1, RB-3, WR-4, OL-7, DE-3, DT-3, LB-4, DB- 2

THE BUZZ: Last year, Nick Saban signaled things were moving in the right direction in Tuscaloosa by bringing in the top-ranked recruiting class in the nation. After getting the Tide into a BCS bowl game, he followed that up with the top class in the nation again.

The talent Saban and his staff are bringing in to Alabama is staggering. Offensive lineman **D.J. Fluker,** linebacker **Nico Johnson**, defensive back **Dre Kirkpatrick** and running back **Trent Richardson** are five-star prospects who-should make an early impact.

Alabama signed the top seven prospects in its state, making things difficult for Auburn. Saban and his staff also did an excellent job in Louisiana by signing guys such as defensive tackle **Darrington Sentimore**, running back **Eddie Lacy** and wide receiver **Kenny Bell**, who was committed to LSU at one point. The Tide also signed prospects from South Carolina, Ohio, Mississippi, Georgia and Florida.

Richardson, from Pensacola (Fla.) Escambia, was a particularly big get. Many were surprised when he committed to Alabama in June 2008, and the Tide held off plenty of competitors down the stretch — including LSU.

Julio Jones should have plenty of help this fall, as four-star wide receivers **Michael Bowman**, **Kendall Kelly** and **Kevin Norwood**, in addition to Bell, are potential early contributors.

2 LSU

THE PARTICULARS: QB-2, RB-2, WR-1, OL-4, DE-3, DT-3, LB-4, DB-2, ATH-2, K-1

THE BUZZ: The battle for the top class in the nation went right down to the wire between Alabama and LSU, but in the end, LSU still has to be happy with how things finished.

The Tigers signed 24 prospects, half of whom hail from Louisiana. Not surprisingly, LSU just about had its pick of the top in-state talent. Perhaps more important was LSU's ability to reach into Texas and sign quarterback **Russell Shepard** and safety **Craig Loston**. Both are five-star prospects. Shepard did a lot of recruiting work and should have plenty of chemistry with the other players on the team as an early enrollee.

Defensive tackle **Chris Davenport** is a load, and he's joined on the inside by **Josh Downs** and **Akiem Hicks**, giving LSU one of the top hauls at the position in the nation. It was looking as if it might be a disappointing year at defensive end in spite of the commitment of **Michael Brockers** until the Tigers got good news from **Sam Montgomery**.

Wide receiver **Rueben Randle** is arguably the jewel of this class. He was ranked as the No. 2 overall prospect in the nation and had offers from just about everyone. His decision came down to the wire, and he chose LSU over Alabama. That was huge because LSU missed out on several of its other top targets at the position.

3 Ohio State

THE PARTICULARS: QB-1, RB-3, WR-3, TE-1, OL-4, DE-2, DT-2, LB-3, DB-4, ATH-2

THE BUZZ: While the Buckeyes have a bit of a black eye from losses in big games in recent seasons, they continue to get the job done on the recruiting trail. This year, they brought in an excellent class, headlined by tremendous defensive talent. As usual, they cleaned up in their home state, signing 14 of the best Ohio had to offer in the Class of 2009.

Perhaps more impressive was the work the Buckeyes did with two prospects from Monroeville, Pa. Five-star linebacker **Dorian Bell** and five-star cornerback **Corey Brown** each had offers from just about every program in the nation, but both made early commitments to Ohio State and held firm to their decisions. Each has great speed, which is exactly what the Buckeyes are looking for. Brown will be joined by plenty more talent in the secondary. **C.J. Barnett**, **Dominic Clarke** and **Jamie Wood** are four-star prospects who should help to keep alive Ohio State's tradition of putting defensive backs into the NFL.

Ohio State also had a lot of success at wide receiver. **Duron Carter**, **Chris Fields** and **James Jackson** hail from Florida, Ohio and Michigan, respectively. Running back **Jaamal Berry** of Miami could be the future at that position if he gets off to a fast start once he arrives on campus.

4 Southern California

THE PARTICULARS: QB-1, RB-1, WR-1, OL-2, DE-3, DT-1, LB-2, DB-4, ATH-2, K-1

THE BUZZ: It should tell you everything you need to know when USC has the No. 4 class in the nation despite signing just 18 players. Once again, the Trojans loaded up with high-quality prospects. More than half the class is composed of California prospects, but USC also reached into Arizona, Hawaii, Georgia, Florida, Utah and Nevada in putting this class together.

The top prospect is Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei quarterback **Matt Barkley**, a 6-3, 226-pounder who has "NFL" written all over him. He has incredible arm strength and the ability to avoid pressure. Ventura (Calif.) St. Bonaventure athlete **Patrick Hall** committed a year before signing day and didn't look back. He's one of the fastest prospects in the nation and has game-breaking potential. Defensive end **Devon Kennard** was the No. 1 overall prospect in Arizona. Five-star safety **T.J. McDonald** is a ballhawk.

Because of the limitations on the size of this class, no position got a huge influx in the number of players. There are four defensive backs, including four-star prospects **Torin Harris**, **Byron Moore** and **Jawanza Starling**, in addition to McDonald, so that may be where the spotlight shines when the class arrives.

5 Texas

THE PARTICULARS: QB-1, WR-1, TE-2, OL-4, DE-4, DT-2, LB-2, DB-3, ATH-1

THE BUZZ: All but one of Texas' 20 signees comes from the Lone Star State, and once again, nearly all of them committed to the Longhorns early in the process. The Longhorns signed five of the top 10 prospects in the state.

Quarterback **Garrett Gilbert** should be a great fit in Greg Davis' offense and checks in as the No. 18 overall prospect in the nation. His left tackle of the future could be Wolfforth (Texas) Frenship prospect **Mason Walters**, a 6-6, 290-pounder with good upper body strength and the ability to move his feet. Defensive end **Alex Okafor** has great athleticism and a huge upside. Okafor needs to get stronger in the weight room before he's ready to be a big-time contributor, but he has the needed talent. He'll be joined on the line by four-star tackle **Calvin Howell**, who is one of the best athletes you'll find at that position.

Gilbert is the only quarterback and four-star prospect **Greg Timmons** is the only receiver, so those positions will be a focus in the next recruiting cycle. Four offensive linemen and four defensive ends give those positions nice boosts, and four-star defensive backs **Eryon Barnett**, **Marcus Davis** and **Kenny Vaccaro** should patrol the secondary for years to come. They're huge additions, considering the pass-happy offenses of the Big 12.

6 Georgia

THE PARTICULARS: QB-2, RB-1, WR-3, TE-1, OL-4, DE-1, DT-2, LB-2, DB-3

THE BUZZ: While Georgia would have loved to have gotten more help at defensive end, all in all it was another excellent class for Mark Richt. That has become commonplace in Athens. Ten in-state recruits highlight the Bulldogs' class, but they also had success in Florida, Tennessee and elsewhere.

Much of the buzz regarding the recruiting class centered on quarterbacks **Aaron Murray** and **Zach Mettenberger**. Mettenberger is the more prototypical passer at 6-5 and 229 pounds. Murray is just 6-1, but he has a cannon for an arm. Murray's high school teammate from Tampa (Fla.) Plant, wide receiver **Orson Charles**, was a huge post-National Signing Day addition for the Bulldogs, and he has excellent hands. **Marlon Brown** is another big-time receiver at 6-5, 205 pounds. He was the No. 1 prospect in Tennessee and the No. 5 receiver in the nation. **Chris Burnette** could be the next great offensive lineman to play for Georgia. Atlanta Washington cornerback **Branden Smith** turned down several other elite programs to stay in-state.

This class is good enough to rank third in the SEC, but would have been the best in several other leagues. Georgia will look to add depth and talent to the defensive line in the next class.

7 Florida State

THE PARTICULARS: QB-1, RB-2, WR-3, TE-2, OL-3, DE-2, DT-1, LB-1, DB-4, ATH-1, K-1

THE BUZZ: While the Seminoles have not been able to match the success they had in the '90s, they're proving they can still go out and recruit with the best of them. Thirteen signees hail from the Sunshine State, and four are from Tallahassee. Several other states provided talent to the 'Noles, as the staff tried to expand the reach of the program.

Defensive tackle **Jacobbi McDaniel** may be Florida State's top incoming freshman. McDaniel may be a bit undersized (6-0/267), but he has excellent strength and explosiveness and is one of the best interior pass rushers you'll find. Valdosta (Ga.) Lowndes cornerback **Greg Reid** was a huge addition. Reid chose Florida State in early February, a nice late boost to the class. Reid was the No. 1 prospect in Georgia and is phenomenal in coverage. Athlete **Willie Downs** committed extremely early in the process and stuck with FSU throughout. His position has yet to be determined, but he has a good combination of explosiveness and speed.

Florida State's performance on the field has not matched its recruiting successes in recent seasons, but there are signs of improvement the staff can point to now. The Seminoles appear poised for another strong haul in 2010.

8 Michigan

THE PARTICULARS: QB-1, RB-3, WR-2, OL-3, DE-2, DT-1, LB-2, DB-4, ATH-3, K-1

THE BUZZ: Despite disappointing on-field results, Rich Rodriguez did an excellent job of convincing high school recruits that brighter days are ahead. The Wolverines signed 22 prospects, with 18 from outside the state of Michigan. Of those in-state prospects, three hail from Detroit. In perhaps a sign of things to come, seven Floridians signed with Michigan.

Five-star defensive tackle **William Campbell** clearly is the best of this bunch. Campbell, one of those from Detroit, has excellent strength and is better against the run than any tackle in this class. Massillon (Ohio) Washington safety **Justin Turner** has excellent coverage skills and a knack for picking off passes. He could be a big corner instead of a safety. San Diego Scripps Ranch quarterback **Tate Forcier** is a dual threat, and he enrolled early. Wide receiver **Je'Ron Stokes** and athlete **Jeremy Gallon** look to be the kind of playmakers the Wolverines need.

While Michigan landed three running backs — **Fitzgerald Toussaint**, **Vincent Smith** and **Teric Jones** — none appears to be elite. There's a ton of talent coming in at wide receiver and on the offensive line, though, and several prospects are entering with the ability to contribute at multiple positions.

9 North Carolina

THE PARTICULARS: QB-1, RB-1, WR-4, TE-1, OL-4, DE-1, DT-1, LB-4, DB-6, ATH-5, K-1

THE BUZZ: After putting together their best season since 2001, the Tar Heels followed that up with their best recruiting class under Butch Davis. North Carolina signed 29 prospects for a program that is undeniably on the rise.

Quarterback **Bryn Renner** saw his stock rise quite a bit as the recruiting process moved along, and he competed well against some of the other top quarterbacks at combines. Though the Heels will be losing Hakeem Nicks, four-star wide receivers **Joshua Adams** and **Jheranie Boyd** figure to make that loss a little easier to overcome. Boyd is an in-state prospect who was the No. 3 receiver in the nation. The headliner of this class is defensive end **Donte Moss**, who will arrive in Chapel Hill with more expectations than any UNC defensive end since Julius Peppers. Moss should be an instant boost to an already young and talented line. Defensive tackle **Jared McAdoo** has a knack for getting to the quarterback.

It will be interesting to see what happens with four-star athlete **Donavan Tate**, who also is an excellent baseball prospect. Many believe it's unlikely he will play college football.

About half of the Heels' class is made up of in-state recruits. Davis wants to keep the top talent at home as well as sell the program to a few high-quality out-of-state prospects each year. He appears to be doing an excellent job of that.

10 Tennessee

THE PARTICULARS: RB-3, WR-3, OL-2, DE-1, DT-1, LB-5, DB-4, ATH-2

THE BUZZ: Many wonder how new coach Lane Kiffin will fare, but he has gone a long way toward silencing anyone who doubts his prowess as a recruiter. Some excellent work by the new Tennessee staff ensured that the Vols would be near the top of the SEC team rankings.

Any examination of this class has to start with post-National Signing Day additions at running back in **Bryce Brown** and **David Oku**. Brown, the nation's No. 1 prospect, looks to be the kind of back Kiffin can build his program around in the future. Oku provides the Vols with an electrifying playmaker. Wide receiver **Nu'Keese Richardson** is undersized (5-8/151), but he can be extremely difficult to bring down in the open field. Cornerback **Janzen Jackson** was committed to LSU for quite some time, but in the end Kiffin was able to persuade him to head to Knoxville. Jackson is the No. 2 cornerback in the nation.

While this is an extremely impressive haul for Tennessee, particularly considering the circumstances, it's clear there are positions to address in the next class — particularly at quarterback and along the defensive line. That said, Kiffin went a long way toward attaining a degree of respectability for the program with his recruiting. It won't be long before folks see whether that translates into success on the field.

11 Florida

THE PARTICULARS: QB-1, RB-1, WR-1, TE-1, OL-5, DE-1, DT-2, LB-2, DB-1, ATH-1

THE BUZZ: How does a class with just 16 signees end up as the No. 11 group in the nation? A quick look at the quality of this group makes that easy to understand. Just four prospects are ranked lower than four stars. Perhaps surprisingly to some, the Gators signed just eight prospects from Florida this year. All of their success under Urban Meyer has translated into more national respect for their program, so the Gators were able to add signees from South Carolina, New Jersey, North Carolina, Maryland, Indiana and Connecticut.

Olney (Md.) Our Lady of Good Counsel linebacker **Jelani Jenkins** looks to be the top prospect in this class. He did not commit until National Signing Day, and he provides a huge boost to the Gators at the position. Jenkins is the No. 10 prospect nationally. He's joined at linebacker by four-star prospect **Jon Bostic**, who was ranked 64th nationally and already is enrolled. Quincy (Fla.) West Gadsden defensive tackle **Gary Brown** is a physical specimen, running the 40-yard dash in 4.67 seconds at 275 pounds. The recruitment of wide receiver **Andre Debose** was a roller-coaster ride and ended in early January on national television. He is the No. 2 wide receiver nationally and the No. 21 prospect overall. Offensive tackle **Xavier Nixon** of Fayetteville (N.C.) Jack Britt is one of the most athletic linemen in the nation.

With two national championships in three years, Florida has cemented itself as the hottest program in the nation. That extends to the recruiting trail. Expect a bigger class next year, which should translate into a high ranking, possibly No. 1.

12 South Carolina

THE PARTICULARS: QB-1, RB-2, WR-5, TE-1, OL-3, DE-5, LB-5, DB-3, ATH-4

THE BUZZ: Steve Spurrier steadily has improved the Gamecocks' talent pool. The Class of 2009 should continue that trend, as there's plenty of game-breaking talent on both sides of the ball. The Gamecocks signed six prospects from Florida, seven from Georgia (including four from Georgia Military College) and 11 from their home state.

St. Matthews (S.C.) Calhoun County wide receiver **Alshon Jeffery** committed to USC early in the recruiting process, only to switch to South Carolina on National Signing Day. He is part of a talented group of skill-position players who Spurrier can incorporate into his offense. Rock Hill (S.C.) South Pointe athlete **Stephon Gilmore** could play a variety of positions, as could athlete **Damario Jeffery** from Columbia, S.C. And Tampa (Fla.) Gaither all-purpose back **Jarvis Giles** is great with the ball in his hands and can be tough to bring down when he gets outside.

The Gamecocks will get a significant boost from the prep school ranks on defense, led by outside linebacker **Tony Straughter** and defensive ends **Leon Mackey** and **Chaz Sutton**.

This is one of the top classes the Gamecocks have pulled in, and there's talent at almost every position. Five wide receivers should give the offense a boost, while five defensive ends and five linebackers should provide plenty of

competition on the other side of the ball. There also are some athletes whose positions have yet to be determined.

13 Oklahoma

THE PARTICULARS: QB-1, RB-1, WR-2, TE-1, OL-4, DE-3, DT-1, LB-4, DB-5, ATH-1

THE BUZZ: As is typically the case, Oklahoma did most of its damage in its region, though the Sooners did branch out to states such as Pennsylvania and Mississippi. The Sooners signed 23 prospects, 11 from Texas. They signed five in-state prospects, as well as three from Kansas.

Lufkin (Texas) High defensive tackle **Jamarkus McFarland** arguably is the best of this bunch. He moves well and was the No. 7 prospect in Texas. Cornerback **Gabe Lynn** of Jenks (Okla.) High was No. 43 nationally, and No. 44 was Dewar (Okla.) High linebacker **Ronnell Lewis**. Las Vegas Bishop Gorman defensive end **Justin Chaisson** has plenty of upside.

This is a fairly typical class for the Sooners under Bob Stoops — balanced, deep and talented. The four offensive linemen heading to Oklahoma are relatively unheralded, but the staff saw things they liked. The defensive backs unquestionably are the jewels of this class.

14 UCLA

THE PARTICULARS: QB-1, RB-1, WR-2, OL-6, DE-2, LB-4, DB-4, ATH-4

THE BUZZ: UCLA knew they were getting an excellent recruiter when they hired Rick Neuheisel, and he came through in his first full recruiting "season" for the Bruins. UCLA signed 24, with all but six from California — two from Hawaii and one each from Nevada, Texas, Utah and Virginia.

The Bruins got some help at quarterback in **Richard Brehaut**, the No. 6 pro-style quarterback in the nation. Brehaut enrolled early and should compete for playing time immediately. Provo (Utah) Timpview offensive tackle **Xavier Su'a Filo** was a huge National Signing Day addition; he chose the Bruins over USC, LSU, BYU and others. Wide receiver **Morrell Presley**, cornerback **Marlon Pollard** and athlete **Randall Carroll** are talented in-state skill-position prospects who instantly boost the athleticism of the roster. Guard **Stanley Hasiak** was the No. 2 prospect in Hawaii.

UCLA hopes it found its quarterback of the future in Brehaut, and the Bruins also gave him a couple of pass-catching targets. The offensive line got a huge injection of talent with six incoming prospects, while four linebackers and four defensive backs should have an early impact on the defense.

15 Miami

THE PARTICULARS: RB-2, TE-3, OL-4, DE-3, DT-2, DB-1, ATH-4

THE BUZZ: Randy Shannon has pulled in another impressive class. Of Miami's 19 signees, 11 are in-state prospects. It truly was a national recruiting effort, though, as the 'Canes signed prospects from Texas, North Carolina, Idaho, Georgia and Delaware.

Sanford (Fla.) Seminole athlete **Ray Ray Armstrong** is the headliner. He saw his stock rise dramatically as the recruiting process moved along, and he has the potential to star at any number of positions early in his college career. Armstrong was the No. 1 athlete in the nation and the No. 13 overall prospect. His high school teammate, defensive end **Dyron Dye**, is another big-time playmaker who should compete for playing time once he hits the weight room. Miami Killian running back **Lamar Miller** has the makings of a big-time player. New Berlin (N.Y.) Milford Academy guard **Brandon Washington**, a Miami native, was the No. 2 prep school prospect in the nation, and **Brandon McGee** was one of the nation's top cornerbacks.

It was a productive class for the Hurricanes, though not a large one. They should get instant help at running back, tight end, defensive end and along the offensive line, and there are several athletes who could be shuffled around by the coaching staff.

Losing five-star running back Bryce Brown to Tennessee was a big blow, but not as devastating as it could have been because Miller and Mike James are impressive backs.

16 Arkansas

THE PARTICULARS: RB-2, WR-2, TE-1, OL-6, DE-2, DT-4, LB-1, DB-6, ATH-6, K-1

THE BUZZ: Bobby Petrino and his staff signed 31 players, making it clear Arkansas will be a force on the recruiting scene in the SEC West. Because the state of Arkansas does not produce as much talent as most other SEC states, the Hogs had to travel a bit to find what they wanted. They looked to the California junior college ranks, as well as to Florida, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas.

The top signee is West Helena (Ark.) Central cornerback **Darius Winston**, who has the size (6-0/180) and speed to be an instant contributor. The consensus top prospect in the state, Winston intercepted eight passes as a senior. He's joined in the secondary by four-star junior college cornerback **Rudell Crim** and four-star junior college safety **Anthony Leon**. Athlete **Ronnie Wingo Jr.** was the No. 2 prospect in Missouri and runs well for someone who's 212 pounds. **Knile Davis** hopes to continue Arkansas' recent history of producing big-time running backs.

Recent coaching changes created an arms race in the SEC West, and this recruiting class puts the program on good footing. In all, there are 12 linemen coming in, if you count guys on both sides of the ball.

17 Michigan State

THE PARTICULARS: QB-1, RB-2, WR-3, TE-2, OL-5, DE-2, LB-5, DB-1, ATH-1, K-1

THE BUZZ: The Spartans followed up a trip to a New Year's Day bowl with an impressive recruiting class that puts their program on solid ground for the foreseeable future. They did it by signing three of the top four and eight of the top 11 prospects in Michigan. The Spartans had some success outside the state as well, going into Florida and Ohio for some top players.

Quarterback **Andrew Maxwell**, from Midland (Mich.) High, may be the centerpiece of this class because of the role he should have in the program in the coming years. He passed for 41 touchdowns in his final two seasons of high school ball. He'll likely be joined in the backfield by Oak Park (Mich.) High running back **Edwin Baker**, who has a nice combination of size and speed, and Battle Creek (Mich.) High running back **Larry Caper**, who also has the ability to get to the outside. **Dion Sims** is an impressive prospect and, for a tight end, is electric in the open field. He's the fastest prospect at his position in the nation. Offensive tackle **David Barrent** was a big commitment because he was the No. 1 prospect in Iowa. On defense, the class is headlined by four-star linebackers **Chris Norman** and **Jeremy Gainer**. Both were among the top 10 prospects in Michigan.

The Class of 2009 was balanced for the Spartans, so there is plenty of room for optimism. Maxwell is the kind of quarterback who can lead a program, and he will have the benefit of five talented offensive linemen coming in to protect him. There's a lot of offensive skill-position talent, and five impressive linebackers mean the defense should be formidable.

18 Ole Miss

THE PARTICULARS: QB-1, RB-5, WR-4, TE-1, OL-5, DE-4, DT-2, LB-5, DB-6, ATH-2, K-2

THE BUZZ: Ed Orgeron certainly left a lot of talent behind for new coach Houston Nutt, and Nutt put that talent to good use last season, earning a victory in the Cotton Bowl over favored Texas Tech. Nutt then did a great job of reloading for the future. Ole Miss brought in 37 signees this year, meaning Rebels coaches will be a bit more selective in the next recruiting cycles. Along with quantity, there's a high level of quality in this group.

The biggest recruiting coup for the Rebels was prep school offensive tackle **Bobbie Massie**. Massie is college-ready and should be prepared to earn a starting role early in his career in Oxford. Macon (Miss.) Noxubee County wide receiver **Patrick Patterson** has an intriguing blend of size and speed, but what's best about him are his hands. He catches absolutely everything thrown in his direction. Four-star running backs **Darius Barksdale** and **Rodney Scott** should figure into the depth chart early. Fort Meade (Md.) High dual-threat quarterback **Raymond Cotton** committed to Auburn early in the recruiting process, but ended up signing with Ole Miss.

Five running backs and four wide receivers means there will be plenty of competition at the skill positions. Massie looks like an immediate contributor on the offensive line, and there is plenty of talent coming in across the board on defense. Two kickers hope to earn early playing time as well.

19 Auburn

THE PARTICULARS: QB-3, RB-4, WR-4, TE-1, OL-2, DE-1, DT-4, LB-4, DB-3, ATH-2

THE BUZZ: It's tough to believe this Auburn class is ranked ninth among

SEC schools, but that says more about how the conference fared on the recruiting trail than anything. With archrival Alabama scooping up most of the top talent in the state, the Tigers looked elsewhere, particularly to Georgia, Mississippi and Texas — though there were some nice in-state signings.

All-purpose back **Onterio McCalebb** may be the most talented prospect in this class. He's joined at running back by **Dontae Aycock**, who rushed for 28 touchdowns at Tampa (Fla.) Chamberlain as a quarterback. Though the Tigers lost one dual-threat quarterback in Raymond Cotton, who signed with Ole Miss, they gained another in **Tyrik Rollison**. Four-star wide receiver **DeAngelo Benton** appeared ready to head to LSU, but he gave Auburn a big boost on National Signing Day. Four-star cornerbacks **Taikwon Paige** and **Reggie Taylor** head to Auburn from Georgia, and both should help continue the Tigers' trend of producing quality defensive backs.

In all, Auburn signed 28 prospects. That's a nice number considering the Tigers had a coaching change. They also had to deal with several other SEC schools putting together monster classes. Auburn has plenty of talent at running back, wide receiver, defensive tackle and linebacker in this class.

20 Stanford

THE PARTICULARS: QB-2, RB-2, WR-3, TE-4, OL-2, DE-4, DT-1, LB-2, DB-1, ATH-1

THE BUZZ: Jim Harbaugh put together one of the most surprising recruiting classes in the nation this year, and the Cardinal already have created a bit of a buzz among prospects in the Class of 2010. Of the incoming freshman, eight of the 22 are from California, and others are from Washington, New York, Texas and Wisconsin.

Upland (Calif.) High quarterback **Josh Nunes** is the No. 13 drop-back passer in the nation. Four-star receivers **Jemari Roberts** and **Jamal-Rashad Patterson** should be excellent targets for Nunes. Four-star running back **Stepfan Taylor** is a load who rushed for 2,463 yards and 33 touchdowns as a senior. San Diego Cathedral Catholic fullback **Tyler Gaffney** will help pave the way for Taylor and others.

The Cardinal looked East for some of their top defensive talent. Four-star linebacker **Shayne Skov** is as physical as they come, and defensive tackle **Terrence Stephens** should be ready to make an early impact.

Perhaps more impressive than Stanford's ranking is that the Cardinal signed just 22 prospects, meaning the quality of the recruits is high. There's a ton of offensive skill-position talent, and four defensive ends provide the position with plenty of depth for the future.

21 Notre Dame

THE PARTICULARS: RB-2, WR-2, TE-2, OL-4, DT-1, LB-4, ATH-1, K-2

THE BUZZ: The Irish signed just 18 prospects. As usual, it was a national recruiting effort, with prospects coming to South Bend from every part of the country.

Irish fans received excellent news on National Signing Day when five-star Hawaii linebacker **Manti Te'o** decided to attend Notre Dame; many believed he was headed to USC. Te'o should provide instant help against the run and should be a force in the middle of the defense. Four-star linebacker **Zeke Motta** of Vero Beach (Fla.) High is another big-time playmaker who has excellent instincts. On the other side of the ball, Glen Ellyn (Ill.) Glenbard West guard **Chris Watt** was the No. 2 prospect at his position in the nation, and Oxnard (Calif.) Santa Clara running back **Cierre Wood** was the No. 8 running back.

While this class was small, the quality was high. The offensive line will receive a big boost with four incoming prospects, and four linebackers should contribute immediately upon their arrival in South Bend.

22 Texas A&M

THE PARTICULARS: RB-2, WR-2, TE-1, OL-4, DE-2, DT-1, LB-6, DB-6, ATH-3, K-1

THE BUZZ: Mike Sherman and his staff signed 28 prospects, with 24 of them from Texas. That obviously will continue to be a trend, and the staff hopes they're able to beat out the Longhorns for more prospects as they improve on the field.

The headliner is five-star Beaumont (Texas) West Brook running back **Christine Michael**, the No. 3 running back in the nation. Four-star wide receiver **Uzoma Nwachukwu** has a lot of speed and also is stronger than most prospects at his position. Reserve (La.) East St. John offensive lineman **Patrick Lewis** may be the best of the out-of-state prospects. Four-star linebacker **Jonathan Stewart** also hails from Louisiana. Junior college cornerback **Coryell Judie** likely will receive a trial by fire in the pass-happy Big 12.

Aggies fans are hoping Michael can be the guy the offense is built around in the coming years. Several offensive linemen are coming in to pave the way, but there's plenty of reasons to be excited about the defensive talent in this class. In all, 12 prospects are coming in to play in the back seven.

23 Virginia Tech

THE PARTICULARS: RB-3, WR-1, TE-1, OL-2, DE-3, DT-2, LB-3, DB-3, ATH-3, K-1

THE BUZZ: Virginia Tech followed up its ACC title and Orange Bowl victory over Cincinnati with one of the league's best recruiting classes. That's something Hokies fans have become accustomed to under Frank Beamer. Of Tech's 22 signees, 17 are from Virginia.

Lynchburg (Va.) Brookville tight end **Logan Thomas** appears to be the most impressive prospect. Thomas, the nation's top-ranked tight end, has speed in the open field and is tough to bring down with just one man. Danville (Va.) George Washington running back **David Wilson** is one of the best home-run threats in the nation, and four-star wide receiver **D.J. Coles** is a huge target at 6-4, 200 pounds. Four-star cornerbacks **Jayron Hosley** and **Jerrodd Williams** should continue Virginia Tech's tradition of producing excellent defensive backs.

Three running backs will look to bolster the Hokies' ground game, but most of the staff's work in this class was done on defense, giving coordinator Bud Foster plenty to work with for years to come. Five defensive linemen, along with the two corners, help make this class one of the ACC's best.

24 Penn State

THE PARTICULARS: QB-1, RB-1, WR-4, OL-7, DE-2, DT-1, LB-2, DB-6, ATH-2, K-1

THE BUZZ: Once again, Penn State took some of the top talent from various states along the Eastern Seaboard. The 27 incoming freshmen make up the fourth-best class in the Big Ten.

Four-star offensive tackle **Eric Shrive** probably is the best of the bunch. He is the No. 11 tackle in the nation and turned down the likes of Notre Dame and Ohio State to head to Happy Valley. Dual-threat **Kevin Newsome** is exactly the kind of quarterback who has made Penn State dangerous in recent years. He not only has a nice arm, but also can beat defenses with his legs. Manahawkin (N.J.) Southern Regional linebacker **Glenn Carson** could be an early contributor, as could fellow Jersey linebacker **Gerald Hodges**, who decommitted from Rutgers. **Darrell Givens** and **Derrick Thomas** are two four-star corners out of Maryland who were highly recruited. Keep an eye on **Anthony Fera**, the nation's No. 2 kicker.

This class might not receive the same type of rave reviews as Michigan's or Ohio State's haul, but there's good balance and a lot of athleticism. Four receivers, seven offensive linemen and six defensive backs tell you about the areas of focus, but getting a marquee quarterback after two years without one was huge.

25 Mississippi State

THE PARTICULARS: QB-1, RB-3, WR-9, OL-2, DE-3, DT-1, LB-2, DB-4, K-2

THE BUZZ: A year ago, it appeared as if Sylvester Croom was solidifying his future as the coach in Starkville. But the Bulldogs regressed, Croom was fired and school officials turned to Florida offensive coordinator Dan Mullen to turn around the program. This class is made up of 27 prospects, including six of the top 10 in Mississippi.

Junior college defensive end **Pernell McPhee** is an SEC-ready player and is the No. 3 JC prospect in the nation. Fellow defensive end **Fletcher Cox** is another physical specimen, and defensive tackle **Josh Boyd** turned down offers from Florida State, Tennessee and Miami to play in Starkville. He's one of the best pass-rushing tackles in America. Offensively, keep an eye on quarterback **Tyler Russell**, who has a good arm and should be a good fit in Mullen's offense. Four-star wide receiver **Chad Bumphis** is excellent after the catch and should have plenty of opportunities early in his college career.

The one thing that sticks out is that the Bulldogs signed nine wide receivers, and they'll be counted on to put a lot of pressure on opposing defenses. The secondary will benefit from the addition of four prospects.

100 FOR 2009

INCOMING FRESHMEN

TOP 100 PLAYERS BY POSITION

QUARTERBACKS

Rk	Name	Ht./Wt.	Hometown/School	College
5.	Matt Barkley	6-3/226	Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei	USC
7.	Russell Shepard	6-1/179	Houston Cypress Ridge	LSU
18.	Garrett Gilbert	6-4/205	Austin (Texas) Lake Travis	Texas
46.	Aaron Murray	6-1/198	Tampa Plant	Georgia
51.	Tajh Boyd	6-1/208	Hampton (Va.) Phoebus	Clemson
60.	Tyrik Rollison	6-2/185	Sulphur Springs (Texas) High	Auburn

RUNNING BACKS

1.	Bryce Brown	6-0/215	Wichita (Kan) Wichita East	Tennessee
6.	Trent Richardson	5-11/210	Pensacola (Fla.) Escambia	Alabama
22.	Christine Michael	5-11/202	Beaumont (Texas) West Brook	Texas A&M
40.	David Wilson	5-11/192	Danville (Va.) George Washington	Virginia Tech
56.	Jaamal Berry	5-10/185	Miami Palmetto	Ohio State
57.	Edwin Baker	5-10/204	Oak Park (Mich.) High	Michigan State
59.	Michael Ford	5-10/200	Leesville (La.) High	LSU
76.	Cierre Wood	6-0/192	Oxnard (CA) Santa Clara	Notre Dame
80.	Lamar Miller	5-11/205	Miami Killian	Miami
97.	David Oku	5-10/186	Midwest City (Okla.) Carl Albert	Tennessee

WIDE RECEIVERS

2.	Rueben Randle	6-3/195	Bastrop (La.) High	LSU
48.	Jheranie Boyd	6-2/184	Gastonia (N.C.) Ashbrook	North Carolina
50.	Patrick Patterson	6-3/215	Macon (Miss.) Noxubee County	Ole Miss
53.	Marlon Brown	6-5/205	Memphis (Tenn.) Harding Academy	Georgia
58.	Terry Hawthorne	6-0/168	East St. Louis (Ill.) High	Illinois
62.	Orson Charles	6-2/230	Tampa Plant	Georgia
65.	Rodney Smith	6-6/202	Miami Archbishop Carroll	Florida State
68.	Nu'Keese Richardson	5-8/151	Pahokee (Fla.) High	Tennessee
75.	Bryce McNeal	6-2/170	Minneapolis Breck	Clemson
90.	Duron Carter	6-2/183	Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas	Ohio State
96.	Morrell Presley	6-4/215	Carson (Calif.) High	UCLA
99.	Alshon Jeffrey	6-3/214	St. Matthews (S.C.) Calhoun County	South Carolina

TIGHT ENDS

71.	Logan Thomas	6-6/233	Lynchburg (Va.) Brookville	Virginia Tech

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN

3.	D.J. Fluker	6-7/350	Foley (Ala.) High	Alabama
29.	Mason Walters	6-6/290	Wolfforth (Texas) Frenship	Texas
37.	Xavier Nixon	6-6/263	Fayetteville (N.C.) Jack Britt	Florida
47.	Chris Faulk	6-6/310	Slidell (La.) Northshore	LSU
49.	Morgan Moses	6-7/347	Richmond (Va.) Meadowbrook	Virginia
52.	Marcus Hall	6-5/290	Cleveland Glenville	Ohio State
63.	Xavier Su'a Filo	6-4/285	Provo (Utah) Timpview	UCLA
66.	Michael Philipp	6-3/320	San Bernardino (Calif.) Arroyo Valley	Oregon State
69.	Garrett Porter	6-6/308	Odessa (Texas) Permian	Texas
77.	Chris Watt	6-3/280	Glen Ellyn (Ill.) Glenbard West	Notre Dame
81.	Chris Burnette	6-2/300	LaGrange (Ga.) Troup	Georgia
85.	David Barrent	6-8/290	West Des Moines (Iowa) Valley	Michigan State
86.	Kevin Graf	6-6/301	Agoura (Calif.) High	USC
88.	Eric Shrive	6-7/285	Scranton (Pa.) West Scranton	Penn State
100.	John Martinez	6-2/264	Salt Lake City Cottonwood	USC

DEFENSIVE ENDS

8.	Devon Kennard	6-3/257	Phoenix Desert Vista	USC
14.	Alex Okafor	6-4/232	Pflugerville (Texas) High	Texas
16.	Donte Moss	6-4/235	Jacksonville (N.C.) Northside	North Carolina
38.	Malliciah Goodman	6-4/255	Florence (S.C.) West Florence	Clemson
42.	Nick Kasa	6-7/245	Broomfield (Colo.) Legacy	Colorado
61.	Ryne Giddins	6-4/235	Seffner (Fla.) Armwood	USF
70.	Demonte McAllister	6-3/263	Tampa Alonso	Florida State
72.	Jarvis Jones	6-3/226	Columbus (Ga.) Carver	USC
73.	Justin Chaisson	6-4/252	Las Vegas Bishop Gorman	Oklahoma
93.	DeOnte Arnett	6-4/243	Forestville (Md.) Forestville Military Academy	Maryland
94.	Fletcher Cox	6-4/240	Yazoo City (Miss.) High	Mississippi State

DEFENSIVE TACKLES

4.	Sheldon Richardson	6-4/292	St. Louis Gateway	Missouri
15.	Jacobbi McDaniel	6-0/267	Madison (Fla.) Madison County	Florida State
23.	Gary Brown	6-3/275	Quincy (Fla.) West Gadsden	Florida
25.	Chris Davenport	6-4/318	Mansfield (La.) Mansfield	LSU
26.	William Campbell	6-5/317	Detroit Cass Tech	Michigan
36.	Jamarkus McFarland	6-3/280	Lufkin (Texas) High	Oklahoma
55.	Calvin Howell	6-4/280	San Antonio Warren	Texas
89.	Corey Adams	6-3/277	Scottsdale (Ariz.) Saguaro	Arizona State
95.	Abry Jones	6-3/250	Warner Robins (Ga.) Northside	Georgia

LINEBACKERS

9.	Vontaze Burfict	6-2/244	Corona (Calif.) Centennial	Arizona State
10.	Jelani Jenkins	6-2/220	Olney (Md.) Our Lady Of Good Counsel	Florida
12.	Manti Te'o	6-2/225	Laie (Hawaii) Punahou School	Notre Dame
32.	Nico Johnson	6-3/226	Andalusia (Ala.) High	Alabama
33.	Dorian Bell	6-0/226	Monroeville (Pa.) Gateway	Ohio State
44.	Ronnell Lewis	6-3/220	Dewar (Okla.) High	Oklahoma
45.	Shayne Skov	6-2/225	Pawling (N.Y.) Trinity Pawling	Stanford
54.	Zeke Motta	6-2/207	Vero Beach (Fla.) High	Notre Dame
64.	Jon Bostic	6-1/218	Wellington (Fla.) Palm Beach Central	Florida
67.	Tana Patrick	6-3/215	Stevenson (Ala.) North Jackson	Alabama
79.	Jerod Askew	6-1/230	Chesapeake (Va.) Oscar Smith	Tennessee

DEFENSIVE BACKS

11.	Dre Kirkpatrick	6-2/180	Gadsden (Ala.) Gadsden City	Alabama
17.	Janzen Jackson	6-0/174	Lake Charles (La.) Barbe	Tennessee
20.	Craig Loston	6-2/193	Aldine (Texas) Eisenhower	LSU
24.	Darius Winston	6-0/180	West Helena (Ark.) Central	Arkansas
27.	Greg Reid	5-9/175	Valdosta (Ga.) Lowndes	Florida State
28.	Branden Smith	5-11/171	Atlanta Washington	Georgia
30.	T.J. McDonald	6-2/200	Fresno (Calif.) Edison	USC
31.	Corey Brown	6-0/180	Monroeville (Pa.) Gateway	Ohio State
35.	Justin Turner	6-2/186	Massillon (Ohio) Washington	Michigan
41.	Cliff Harris	6-0/165	Fresno (Calif.) Edison	Oregon
43.	Gabe Lynn	6-0/185	Jenks (Okla.) High	Oklahoma
74.	Jamie Wood	6-2/190	Pickerington (Ohio) Central	Ohio State
78.	Kevin Brent	5-11/196	Dallas South Oak Cliff	Oklahoma
82.	Justin Green	5-10/178	Louisville (Ky.) Male	Illinois
92.	Brandon McGee	5-11/186	Plantation (Fla.) High	Miami
98.	Byron Moore	6-0/188	Harbor City (Calif.) Narbonne	USC

ATHLETES

13.	Ray Ray Armstrong	6-4/218	Sanford (Fla.) Seminole	Miami
19.	Patrick Hall	6-1/181	Ventura (Calif.) St. Bonaventure	USC
21.	Andre Debose	6-0/170	Sanford (Fla.) Seminole	Florida
34.	Willie Downs	6-2/192	Massillon (Ohio) Washington	Florida State
39.	Randall Carroll	5-10/175	Los Angeles Cathedral	UCLA
83.	Donavan Tate	6-2/195	Cartersville (Ga.) High	North Carolina
84.	Stephon Gilmore	6-1/180	Rock Hill (S.C.) South Pointe	South Carolina
87.	Damario Jeffery	6-3/215	Columbia (S.C.) High	South Carolina
91.	Chris Whaley	6-3/220	Madisonville (Texas) High	Texas

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My success is not an accident, nor a miracle, nor the work of fate! It is the product of insight, superior analysis and hard work, and studying with the best in the business.

I learned the college game as a player, and later as a scout and recruiter in the Southeastern Conference. My college mentor was the great Alabama coach **Paul "Bear" Bryant,** who won five national championships in a career that spanned four decades.

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Last Year:	**200 UNITS**	
We had::	Air Force (-10½) 35	San Diego State 10
	A 25-Point Blowout Winner!	
Win My:	**NFL GAME OF THE YEAR**	
Last Year:	**200 UNITS**	
We had:	Titans (-8 ½) 34	Chiefs 10
	A 24-Point Blowout Winner!	
Win My:	**SEASON-OPENING BLOWOUT**	
Last Year:	**100 UNITS**	
We had:	Florida (-36 ½)56	Hawaii 10
	A 46-Point Blowout Winner!	
Win My:	**COLLEGE BLOWOUT GAME OF YEAR**	
Last Year:	**100 UNITS**	
We had:	TCU (-32) 54	Wyoming 7
	A 47-Point Blowout Winner!	
Win My:	**NFL BLOWOUT GAME OF YEAR**	
Last Year:	**200 UNITS**	
We had:	Patriots (-7) 49	Raiders 26
	A 23-Point Blowout Winner!	

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100 FOR 2010

TOP HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

TOP 100 PLAYERS RANKED

RK	NAME	POS	HT/WT	HOMETOWN/SCHOOL
1.	Seantrel Henderson	OT	6-8/301	Saint Paul (Minn.) Cretin-Derham Hall
2.	Lache Seastrunk	RB	5-11/192	Temple (Texas) High
3.	Darius White	WR	6-4/205	Fort Worth Dunbar
4.	Marcus Lattimore	RB	5-11/210	Duncan (S.C.) Byrnes
5.	Matt Elam	ATH	6-0/205	Palm Beach Gardens (Fla.) Dwyer
6.	Jackson Jeffcoat	SDE	6-5/230	Plano (Texas) Plano Wes
7.	Lamarcus Joyner	CB	5-8/166	Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas
8.	James Hurst	OT	6-6/284	Indianapolis Plainfield
9.	Michael Dyer	RB	5-8/201	Little Rock (Ark.) Little Rock Christian
10.	Jeff Luc	ILB	6-1/230	Port St. Lucie (Fla.) Treasure Coast
11.	Malcolm Jones	RB	6-0/210	Westlake Village (Calif.) Oaks Christian
12.	Chris Martin	ILB	6-4/224	Oakland Bishop O'Dowd
13.	Ronald Powell	SDE	6-4/240	Moreno Valley (Calif.) Rancho Verde
14.	Trovon Reed	WR	6-0/173	Thibodaux (La.) High
15.	J.R. Ferguson	SDE	6-4/260	Frederick (Md.) St. John's Catholic Prep
16.	Jordan Hicks	OLB	6-2/210	West Chester (Ohio) Lakota West
17.	D.J. Morgan	APB	5-11/175	Woodland Hills (Calif.) Taft
18.	Kyle Prater	WR	6-5/192	Hillside (Ill.) Proviso West
19.	Anthony Barr	ATH	6-4/230	Los Angeles Loyola
20.	Reggie Wilson	SDE	6-4/240	Haltom City (Texas) Haltom
21.	Brandon Willis	SDE	6-4/250	Duncan (S.C.) Byrnes
22.	Khairi Fortt	OLB	6-2/220	Stamford (Conn.) High
23.	Markeith Ambles	WR	6-2/182	McDonough (Ga.) Henry Country
24.	Corey Nelson	OLB	6-0/210	Dallas Skyline
25.	Blake Bell	DQB	6-6/210	Wichita (Kan.) Bishop Carroll
26.	Robert Woods	WR	6-1/180	Gardena (Calif.) Serra
27.	Jaylen Watkins	ATH	6-1/172	Cape Coral (Fla.) High
28.	Dillon Baxter	RB	5-11/187	San Diego Mission Bay
29.	Robert Crisp	OT	6-7/299	Chapel Hill (N.C.) High
30.	DeMarcus Milliner	CB	6-0/180	Millbrook (Ala.) Stanhope Elmore
31.	Alec Ogletree	S	6-3/210	Newnan (Ga.) High
32.	Jamel Turner	WDE	6-3/210	Youngstown (Ohio) Ursuline
33.	Shakim Phillips	WR	6-2/191	Wayne (N.J.) De Paul Catholic
34.	Gabe King	SDE	6-6/253	Greensboro (N.C.) Page
35.	Kelcy Quarles	DT	6-4/250	Greenwood (S.C.) High
36.	James Stone	OT	6-5/297	Nashville Maplewood
37.	Christian Green	ATH	6-2/200	Tampa Catholic
38.	Martavis Bryant	WR	6-3/175	Anderson (S.C.) T. L. Hanna
39.	Xavier Grimble	TE	6-6/245	Las Vegas Bishop Gorman
40.	Brent Benedict	OT	6-4/278	Jacksonville Bolles
41.	Keenan Allen	ATH	6-3/195	Greensboro (N.C.) Northern Guilford
42.	Tony Jefferson	OLB	6-0/196	Chula Vista (Calif.) Eastlake
43.	Justin McCay	ATH	6-3/197	Shawnee (Kan.) Bishop Miege
44.	William Gholston	SDE	6-7/237	Detroit Southeastern
45.	Damien Robinson	OT	6-7/330	Olive Branch (Miss.) High
46.	Mack Brown	RB	5-11/185	Lithonia (Ga.) Martin Luther King
47.	Jonathan Dowling	S	6-3/178	Bradenton (Fla.) Southeast
48.	Trey Hopkins	OT	6-4/260	Galena Park (Texas) North Shore
49.	Sean Parker	S	6-0/185	Harbor City (Calif.) Narbonne
50.	Owamagbe Odighizuwa	WDE	6-3/234	Portland Douglas
51.	Nick Demien	OT	6-6/295	Wentzville (Mo.) Timberland
52.	Phillip Sims	PQB	6-0/209	Chesapeake (Va.) Oscar Smith
53.	Jarrick Williams	S	6-2/205	Prichard (Ala.) Blount
54.	Andrew Norwell	OT	6-7/275	Cincinnati Anderson
55.	Kaleb Eulls	WDE	6-4/245	Yazoo City (Miss.) Yazoo County
56.	Jordan Allen	SDE	6-6/248	Monroe (La.) West Monroe
57.	Christian Thomas	TE	6-3/235	Palmdale (Calif.) Highland
58.	Victor Hampton	CB	5-11/170	Charlotte Independence
59.	Jacques Smith	WDE	6-3/225	Ooltewah (Tenn.) High
60.	Alfy Hill	SDE	6-4/245	Shallotte (N.C.) West Brunswick
61.	Chris Dunkley	WR	5-10/164	Royal Palm Beach (Fla.) High
62.	Jake Matthews	OT	6-5/275	Missouri City (Texas) Elkins
63.	Corey Lemonier	WDE	6-4/223	Hialeah (Fla.) High
64.	Eric Reid	S	6-3/175	Geismar (La.) Dutchtown
65.	Andrew Rodriguez	OT	6-6/298	Aurora (Neb.) High
66.	Latwan Anderson	S	5-11/185	Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward
67.	Christian Jones	OLB	6-4/220	Casselberry (Fla.) Lake Howell
68.	Taylor Bible	DT	6-3/280	Denton (Texas) Guyer
69.	Corey Brown	RB	6-0/171	Springfield (Pa.) Cardinal O'Hara
70.	Chris Jones	WR	6-0/172	Daingerfield (Texas) High
71.	Marquis Flowers	ATH	6-3/195	Goodyear (Ariz.) Millennium
72.	Curtis White	TE	6-5/240	Eugene (Ore.) Sheldon
73.	Gerald Christian	WDE	6-3/220	Palm Beach Gardens (Fla.) Dwyer
74.	Garrison Smith	DT	6-4/250	Atlanta Douglass
75.	Dominic Espinosa	OG	6-3/282	Cedar Park (Texas) High
76.	Austin Hinder	PQB	6-4/180	Steamboat Springs (Colo.) High
77.	Delvin Jones	SDE	6-6/230	Miami Palmetto
78.	DeAndrew White	WR	6-0/170	Galena Park (Texas) North Shore
79.	Terrence Mitchell	CB	5-10/165	Tampa Hillsborough
80.	DeMarco Cobbs	ATH	6-1/198	Tulsa (Okla.) Tulsa Central
81.	Joe Boisture	PQB	6-6/202	Goodrich (Mich.) High
82.	Sharrif Floyd	DT	6-3/294	Philadelphia Washington
83.	Ted Meline	WR	6-2/171	Miami Booker T. Washington
84.	Fre'Shad Hunter	SDE	6-5/246	Cary (N.C.) High
85.	Ivan McCartney	WR	6-3/180	Miramar (Fla.) High
86.	Ahmad Dixon	S	6-1/194	Waco (Texas) Midway
87.	Zack McCray	SDE	6-4/236	Lynchburg (Va.) Brookville
88.	Paul Jones	PQB	6-2/212	McKees Rocks (Pa.) Sto Rox
89.	Jordan James	RB	5-10/190	Corona (Calif.) High
90.	Michaelee Harris	WR	6-0/167	Miami Northwestern
91.	Cecil Whiteside	OLB	6-3/205	Newport Beach (Calif.) Newport Harbor
92.	Pete Thomas	PQB	6-5/201	El Cajon (Calif.) Valhalla
93.	Dyjuan Lewis	WR	6-2/186	Indianapolis Pike
94.	Spencer Ware	ATH	5-11/220	Cincinnati Princeton
95.	Josh Reese	WR	6-1/182	Miami Central
96.	Kadron Boone	WR	6-1/190	Ocala (Fla.) Trinity Catholic
97.	Nick Forbes	OLB	6-0/217	Frederick (Md.) Thomas Johnson
98.	Da'Rick Rogers	WR	6-3/206	Calhoun (Ga.) High
99.	Marvin Robinson	OLB	6-1/190	Eagle Lake (Fla.) Lake Region
100.	Aaron Benson	OLB	6-2/205	Cedar Hill (Texas) High

TOP 10 SCHOOLS BY POSITION

Quarterback

1. LSU
2. Georgia
3. USC
4. Auburn
5. Texas
6. Kentucky
7. Utah
8. Clemson
9. Missouri
10. Stanford

Running Back

1. Tennessee
2. Alabama
3. Ole Miss
4. Ohio State
5. Auburn
6. Virginia Tech
7. Texas A&M
8. Illinois
9. Florida State
9. South Carolina
9. Stanford

Wide Receiver

1. Alabama
2. Georgia
3. West Virginia
4. North Carolina
5. Ohio State
6. Mississippi State
7. Ole Miss
8. Oregon
9. South Carolina
10. Florida State

Tight End

1. Stanford
2. Virginia Tech
3. Michigan State
4. Texas
5. Auburn
5. Georgia
7. Miami
8. Arizona
8. BYU
10. Southern Miss

Offensive Line

1. Alabama
2. Texas
3. Florida
4. Michigan State
5. Ohio State
6. UCLA
7. LSU
8. Arkansas
9. Virginia
10. Georgia

Defensive Tackle

1. LSU
2. Florida
3. Missouri
4. Troy
5. Alabama
6. Texas Tech
7. Texas
8. Auburn
8. Florida State
10. Michigan

Defensive End

1. South Carolina
2. Texas
3. USC
4. USF
5. Wisconsin
6. Alabama
7. Kansas
8. Mississippi State
9. Florida State
10. Maryland

Linebacker

1. Notre Dame
2. Alabama
3. Ohio State
4. Tennessee
5. Florida
6. South Carolina
7. Oklahoma
8. Arizona State
9. North Carolina
10. Ole Miss

Defensive Back

1. Arkansas
2. Oklahoma
3. Ohio State
4. USC
5. Tennessee
6. Florida State
7. Kansas
8. UCLA
9. Alabama
10. Michigan

Athlete

1. Miami
2. South Carolina
3. UCLA
4. North Carolina
4. USC
6. Mississippi State
7. Arkansas
8. Michigan
9. USF
10. Florida State

Kickers

1. Oregon
2. Florida State
3. Indiana
3. Penn State
3. Rice
6. Mississippi State
7. Notre Dame
8. LSU
8. Washington
10. Northern Illinois

Talented, Mature Gators Take Aim at More Titles

After winning the 2006 national championship, Florida stumbled to a 9-4 record and a Capital One Bowl loss to Michigan.

Coach Urban Meyer said the downfalls were a void in two recruiting classes and lack of leadership. He doesn't expect another such decline after winning the national title in 2008.

"The maturity level is different," Meyer said. "The sense of entitlement, the selfishness, worrying about things that don't contribute to next year are not here."

Meyer clearly has the best talent in the SEC. He has a Heisman Trophy winner in quarterback Tim Tebow. He has an All-American linebacker in Brandon Spikes. He has 20 starters (including the kicker and punter) returning from the team that defeated Oklahoma for the national championship.

That makes the Gators an overwhelming favorite to become the first repeat winner of the SEC since Tennessee in 1997-98.

EAST DIVISION

Meyer said he tweaked his offense in the spring to stay one step ahead of the competition. Tebow has tightened his throwing motion to provide more accuracy. He also worked some from under center in the I-formation as the Gators worked on developing a power run game.

The defense, led by Spikes, could be awesome. Defensive ends Jermaine Cunningham and Carlos Dunlap might be the best pair in the league. The secondary is the best in the SEC. Florida should be better than it was a year ago.

Georgia is going with Joe Cox at quarterback to replace Matthew Stafford. He has a terrific receiver in A.J. Green, and the offensive line should be much improved. But no one appears close to replacing running back Knowshon Moreno, and the defense allowed at least 38 points in five games.

Tennessee has questions at quarterback, offensive tackle and defensive tackle. That's not a good formula for winning at a high level. First-year coach Lane Kiffin has brought energy and excitement to the Vols — and a top-10 recruiting class — but that isn't enough to hang with Florida. For now.

South Carolina's quarterback situation remains a concern. Stephen Garcia has the ability, but he hasn't proven he can win at this level. The running game, worst in the SEC last season, figures to struggle again.

Kentucky has won three consecutive bowl games for the first time in school history, but that streak could end this season. Rich Brooks has upgraded the overall talent, and the defense has a chance to be the best he's had in the

Southeastern Conference Picks

SEC EAST	Good news	Bad news	Our call
1. Florida	QB Tim Tebow, LB Brandon Spikes, 18 other starters return from title team.	Gators must fight complacency, replace both starting offensive tackles.	With the SEC's best players and easiest schedule, another national title is within reach.
2. Georgia	OL goes from weakness to strength; DTs among best pair in SEC.	Had 46 player surgeries since August; QB Matthew Stafford, RB Knowshon Moreno gone.	Without Stafford and Moreno, the offense won't be as productive, but nine wins is possible.
3. Tennessee	SS Eric Berry anchors stout defense; Lane Kiffin signed top 10 recruiting class.	QB play, lack of pass protection is a concern; FS Demetrice Morley was dismissed.	New energy and talented recruits should help Vols win two or three more games.
4. South Carolina	Stephen Garcia finally completed a spring; OLB Eric Norwood didn't turn pro.	Two junior DBs turned pro early; all-time leading receiver Kenny McKinley graduated.	If Garcia comes through, Gamecocks could exceed last year's 7-6 record.
5. Kentucky	Three defenders — Jeremy Jarmon, Micah Johnson, Trevard Lindley — didn't turn pro.	Lost five from SEC's 11th-ranked defense; QB play is shaky, RBs are average.	Tough early schedule will challenge Wildcats to make fourth consecutive bowl.
6. Vanderbilt	Commodores return 18 starters from team that won school's first bowl since '55.	CB-WR D.J. Moore turned pro early; uncertain QB play; lack of WRs.	Bobby Johnson has built a solid program, but matching 7-6 season will be tough.
SEC WEST			
1. LSU	Hired former Tennessee DC John Chavis; great depth at RB; very talented team.	Lost three starting DL and two key OL; still unproven at quarterback.	Tigers should bounce back from 3-5 SEC mark to challenge for West crown.
2. Alabama	Nine starters return from nation's No. 3 defense; WR Julio Jones sparks offense.	RB Glen Coffee (1,383 yards) turned pro early; lost three key OL starters.	Tide won't roll to 12-0 start, but defense pushes Bama to West title contention.
3. Ole Miss	QB Jevan Snead, RB-WR Dexter McCluster return. No Gators on schedules.	Lost best OL (Michael Oher), best DL (Peria Jerry); expectations too high?	Rebels won't sneak up on anybody, but should match last year's nine-win season.
4. Arkansas	Transfer QB Ryan Mallet solid in spring; RB Michael Smith is gifted.	Four tailbacks missed spring (injuries); defense last in SEC in yards and points allowed.	Second-half improvement should carry over in Bobby Petrino's second season.
5. Auburn	New spread coach has support of staff; offense can't get any worse.	Uncertain QB play; weak at receiver; lost two defenders early to NFL.	With better offense, record improves ... but Tigers not a contender to win the West.
6. Miss. State	New coach Dan Mullen should improve poor offense; RB Anthony Dixon returns.	Bulldogs don't have a QB or the skill people to run the spread; defense is average.	Looks like a tough debut season for Mullen, and another 4-8 record is possible.

Lindy's 2009 ALL-SEC Team

OFFENSE - First Team

QB	Tim Tebow	Sr.	Florida
RB	Charles Scott	Sr.	LSU
RB	Michael Smith	Sr.	Arkansas
WR	A.J. Green	So.	Georgia
WR	Julio Jones	So.	Alabama
TE	D.J. Williams	Jr.	Arkansas
C	Ryan Pugh	Jr.	Auburn
OL	Ciron Black	Sr.	LSU
OL	Mike Johnson	Sr.	Alabama
OL	John Jerry	Sr.	Ole Miss
OL	Clint Boling	Jr.	Georgia
AP	Javier Arenas	Sr.	Alabama
PK	Joshua Shene	Sr.	Ole Miss

DEFENSE - First Team

DL	Terrence Cody	Sr.	Alabama
DL	Dan Williams	Sr.	Tennessee
DL	Jermaine Cunningham	Sr.	Florida
DL	Antonio Coleman	Sr.	Auburn
LB	Rolando McClain	Jr.	Alabama
LB	Brandon Spikes	Sr.	Florida
LB	Eric Norwood	Sr.	South Carolina
DB	Eric Berry	Jr.	Tennessee
DB	Trevard Lindley	Sr.	Kentucky
DB	Joe Haden	Jr.	Florida
DB	Chad Jones	Jr.	LSU
P	Chas Henry	Jr.	Florida

OFFENSE - Second Team

QB	Jevan Snead	Jr.	Ole Miss
RB	Anthony Dixon	Sr.	Miss. State
RB	Mark Ingram	So.	Alabama
WR	Brandon LaFell	Sr.	LSU
WR	Dexter McCluster	Sr.	Ole Miss
TE	Aaron Hernandez	Jr.	Florida
C	Ben Jones	So.	Georgia
OL	Mike Pouncey	Jr.	Florida
OL	Maurkice Pouncey	Jr.	Florida
OL	Lee Ziemba	Jr.	Auburn
OL	Trinton Sturdivant	So.	Georgia
AP	Brandon James	Sr.	Florida
PK	Leigh Tiffin	Sr.	Alabama

DEFENSE - Second Team

DL	Geno Atkins	Sr.	Georgia
DL	Carlos Dunlap	Jr.	Florida
DL	Greg Hardy	Sr.	Ole Miss
DL	Jeremy Jarmon	Sr.	Kentucky
LB	Micah Johnson	Sr.	Kentucky
LB	Rico McCoy	Sr.	Tennessee
LB	Rennie Curran	Jr.	Georgia
DB	Ahmad Black	Jr.	Florida
DB	Major Wright	Jr.	Florida
DB	Janoris Jenkins	So.	Florida
DB	Javier Arenas	Sr.	Alabama
P	Spencer Lanning	Jr.	South Carolina

Commonwealth, but the Wildcats don't have enough playmakers surrounding an average quarterback.

Vanderbilt won a bowl for the first time since 1955, and everyone in the SEC will tell you what a fine coach Bobby Johnson is. But the Commodores were last in the SEC in total offense and 10th in run defense last year. A second straight bowl trip is doubtful.

WEST DIVISION

If sophomore quarterback Jordan Jefferson is productive, LSU will be in the thick of the West race. The Tigers have great depth at running back and playmaking receiver Brandon LaFell.

The addition of defensive coordinator John Chavis, who inherits a great pass rush and a talented secondary, will make for a much-improved defense. Chavis said he has the two best defensive backs he's ever had on one team — Chad Jones and Patrick Peterson.

LSU, however, must navigate a more treacherous schedule than either Alabama or Ole Miss.

Alabama, which had a perfect regular season in 2008, has to replace steady quarterback John Parker Wilson and the 1,383 rushing yards of Glen Coffee. Greg McElroy won the quarterback job in the spring, but three key offensive linemen are gone.

The defense should again be outstanding, and the front seven ranks with the best in the country.

Ole Miss, gunning for its first SEC title since 1963, must now deal with projections of a top 10 finish. The Rebels are blessed with skill players, including quarterback Jevan Snead and the elusive Dexter McCluster.

In the second half of last season, Arkansas upset LSU, Tulsa and Auburn. Ryan Mallett, a transfer from Michigan, could make a splash. He has a 1,000-yard rusher in Michael Smith and a tight end, D.J. Williams, who caught 61 passes last season. But the defense is weak.

Auburn is going with a spread option behind new offensive coordinator Gus Malzahn, who helped Tulsa lead the nation in total yards. But the Tigers left spring unsettled at quarterback and are devoid of talent at receiver. Gene Chizik can't be expected to challenge in the West Division right off the bat.

Dan Mullen at Mississippi State also faces a major task. He will run the spread option without a quarterback who fits the system, unless true freshman Tyler Russell is the answer.

— Jimmy Hyams

Most Valuable Player

Tim Tebow
QB, Florida

Offensive Player of the Year

Charles Scott
RB, LSU

Defensive Player of the Year

Eric Berry
SS, Tennessee

Newcomer of the Year

Bryce Brown
RB, Tennessee

HONOR ROLL

Most Accurate Passer	Tim Tebow	Florida
Strongest arm	Tim Tebow	Florida
Best scrambler	Jordan Jefferson	LSU
Coolest in the clutch	Tim Tebow	Florida
Toughest to bring down	Dexter McCluster, WR	Ole Miss
Best hands	Julio Jones, WR	Alabama
Most dangerous deep threat	A.J. Green, WR	Georgia
Best pass blocker	Ciron Black, OT	LSU
Best run blocker	Mike Johnson, OG	Alabama
Best cover corner	Trevard Lindley	Kentucky
Best pass rusher	Jermaine Cunningham, DE	Florida
Special teams demon	Nick Reveiz	Tennessee

The Big Ones

Sept. 5	
Alabama-Va. Tech (Atlanta)	For second year in a row, Tide opens season in Georgia Dome vs. ACC.
Georgia at Oklahoma State	Dawgs get look at life after Stafford, Moreno vs. great Big 12 offense.
Sept. 12	
South Carolina at Georgia	If Gamecocks are to contend, a win in Athens would provide momentum.
UCLA at Tennessee	First real test for first-year Vols coach Lane Kiffin and high-priced staff.
Sept. 19	
Tennessee at Florida	If Urban Meyer can run it up on Vols he will; tough road test for UT.
West Virginia at Auburn	Can Auburn's fast-paced spread outscore Mountaineers spread option?
Sept. 26	
Arizona State at Georgia	Sun Devils make rare trip to Eastern Time Zone to face SEC power.
Oct. 3	
Auburn at Tennessee	Vols seek revenge against team it should have beaten last year.
LSU at Georgia	If LSU wants to win West, it needs to get a win "Between the Hedges."
Oct. 10	
Alabama at Ole Miss	Tide barely beat Rebels last year; home field might be the difference.
Florida at LSU	Gators fell at LSU two years ago when Tigers went 5 of 5 on fourth downs.
Georgia at Tennessee	This could decide who finishes second in East and gets better bowl bid.
Oct. 17	
South Carolina at Alabama	Can Spurrier pull the road upset against powerful West foe?
Oct. 24	
Tennessee at Alabama	In last two games, Vols haven't been competitive against Saban's Tide.
Oct. 31	
Ole Miss at Auburn	Rebels can't stumble on the Plains if they want to win division.
Florida-Georgia (Jacksonville)	Gators have won 16 of last 19, including romp last season.
Nov. 7	
LSU at Alabama	Bama snapped five-game losing skid to LSU, sent Tigers reeling in OT.
Nov. 14	
Auburn at Georgia	Dawgs have tamed Tigers three years in a row, two in routs.
Florida at South Carolina	This remains a big game as long as Spurrier remains at SC.
Tennessee at Ole Miss	UT assistant Ed Orgeron returns to Oxford for first time since firing.
Nov. 21	
LSU at Ole Miss	This could impact West Division race in a rivalry that has heated up.
Nov. 27	
Alabama at Auburn	Tide snapped Auburn's six-year win streak and sent Tuberville packing.
Nov. 28	
Florida State at Florida	Gators try to maintain superiority over in-state challengers.
Georgia at Georgia Tech	Yellow Jackets ended six-year Dawgs' run with high-scoring win.
Clemson at South Carolina	These in-state rivals genuinely dislike each other.

Photo by R.D. Moore

Charles Scott

Bowl Connections

SEC Champ
BCS (national title game if ranked #1 or #2, otherwise Sugar)

SEC #2	Capital One vs. Big Ten #2
SEC #3-5	Outback vs. Big Ten #3
SEC #3-5	Cotton vs. Big 12 #2
SEC #3-5	Chick-Fil-A vs. ACC #3
SEC #6-8	Music City vs. ACC
SEC #6-8	Liberty vs. Conference USA
SEC #6-8	Independence vs. Big 12

Top 10 NFL Talent

1. Eric Berry	SS	Jr.	Tennessee	Ball-hawking skills and athleticism make him a can't-miss pro.
2. Tim Tebow	QB	Sr.	Florida	Scouts eager to watch his smoother delivery this season.
3. Brandon Spikes	LB	Sr.	Florida	Do-it-all middle 'backer has all kinds of physical presence.
4. Trevard Lindley	CB	Sr.	Kentucky	Enters the season rated as the top senior corner in 2010 Draft.
5. Ciron Black	OT	Sr.	LSU	Steps out of the shadows of other LSU OL like Herman Johnson.
6. Terrence Cody	DT	Sr.	Alabama	Simply mammoth; pros will love his run-stuffing skills.
7. Brandon LaFell	WR	Sr.	LSU	Size, hands, deep speed ... and a nose for the end zone.
8. Rolando McClain	LB	Jr.	Alabama	The star of a highly rated Alabama defense.
9. Geno Atkins	DT	Sr.	Georgia	Was thought to be a first-rounder if he had left early.
10. Jermaine Cunningham	DE	Sr.	Florida	Big-time pass rusher who relies on his speed.

By Jamie Newberg | Rivals.com

1. ALABAMA: For the second consecutive year, the Crimson Tide finished with the top class in the land. In-state, the Tide grabbed big-name recruits such as offensive tackle D.J. Fluker, cornerback Dre Kirkpatrick, quarterback A.J. McCarron, linebackers Nico Johnson and Tana Patrick, wide receiver Kendall Kelly, lineman Brandon Moore and defensive end William Ming. Alabama also signed the top player in Florida in running back Trent Richardson, a terrific safety in Rod Woodson from Mississippi and three solid offensive line prospects from Georgia.

2. LSU: This is an unbelievable class with in-state stars such as Rueben Randle, defensive tackles Chris Davenport and Josh Downs, running back Michael Ford, linebacker Barkevious Mingo and offensive linemen Carneal Ainsworth and Chris Faulk. The group also includes out-of-staters such as quarterback Russell Shepard, linebacker Kevin Minter, athlete Drayton Calhoun, safety Craig Loston, defensive lineman Michael Brockers and offensive lineman Stavion Lowe.

3. GEORGIA: The Bulldogs landed two big-time quarterbacks in Aaron Murray and Zach Mettenberger. Wide receiver Rantavious Wooten is a playmaker from Florida who should make a splash. The Bulldogs once again are solid in the trenches with Chris Burnette, Abry Jones, Dallas Lee, Austin Long and Montez Robinson. The back-seven headliner is speedy cornerback Branden Smith.

4. TENNESSEE: Lane Kiffin and his staff had a post-National Signing Day run that included the nation's top prospect in running back Bryce Brown and five-star defensive back Janzen Jackson. The Vols also hung onto the nation's top all-purpose back in David Oku. This trio, along with recruits such as wide receiver Nu'Keese Richardson, athlete Marsalis Teague, linebacker Jerod Askew and cornerback Eric Gordon, shot the Vols up to 10th nationally.

5. FLORIDA: The Gators landed five O-linemen, including big-time tackle prospect Xavier Nixon. Florida pulled in big-timer linebackers in Jon Bostic and Jelani Jenkins. Wide receiver Andre Debose is one of the most electrifying players in the nation. Gary Brown is a five-star gem at defensive tackle. Florida's young depth at corner hurt the Gators in their recruitment of some star defensive backs.

6. SOUTH CAROLINA: The Gamecocks landed two potential standout running backs from Florida in Ben Axon and Jarvis Giles. There is a nice group of receivers headed to Columbia, led by Alshon Jeffery, Lamar Scruggs and DeAngelo Smith. Defensively, the group is led by defensive linemen Ronald Byrd, Leon Mackey, Duane Chisolm and Chaz Sutton, potential linebacker prospects such as Matt Coffee, Damario Jeffery and DeVonte Holloman and defensive backs such as Stephon Gilmore and Corey Addison.

7. ARKANSAS: In Bobby Petrino's first full recruiting "season," he and his staff finished No. 17 nationally. Headlining the group is in-state five-star cornerback prospect Darius Winston. He's the state's highest-rated prospect since running back Darren McFadden. The Razorbacks also landed the No. 2 in-state prospect in offensive lineman Colby Berna. They also did well in Texas.

8. OLE MISS: The Rebels signed an SEC-high 37 prospects, and they closed better than just about anyone in the country. Ole Miss landed wide receiver Patrick Patterson, quarterback Raymond Cotton, linebackers D.T. Shackelford and Mike Marry, offensive tackle Bobby Massie, defensive tackle Corey Gaines and defensive end Craig Drummond late in the recruiting process.

9. AUBURN: This class starts at quarterback. Tyrik Rollison is one of the most gifted dual-threat quarterbacks in the nation. The running game should get a big boost from Onterio McCalebb and Dontae Aycock. National Signing Day brought the Tigers gifted receivers in DeAngelo Benton and Emory Blake. Brandon Jacobs is a big back who could play linebacker. Tight end Philip Lutzenkirchen has great hands. Jamar Travis, Reggie Taylor and Eltoro Freeman lead the way defensively.

10. MISSISSIPPI STATE: For his first recruiting class, new Bulldogs coach Dan Mullen did an excellent job, finishing No. 10 in the SEC, but No. 23 nationally. Mullen landed a solid quarterback for his system in Tyler Russell. Russell should get help from wide receivers Chad Bumphis, Ricco Sanders, Darius Slay, Brandon Heavens and Chris Smith and running backs Montrell Conner and LaDarius Perkins. The defensive group is led by tackle Josh Boyd and ends Fletcher Cox and Pernell McPhee.

11. KENTUCKY: The Wildcats quietly assembled a good class. It starts at quarterback with Morgan Newton and Ryan Mossakowski. Sam Simpson and Larry Warford will bring some beef to the interior of the offensive line. Defensively, Qua Huzzie and Tristian Johnson are good ones.

12. VANDERBILT: The Commodores signed only 17, nonetheless, this is a good group led by tight ends Mason Johnston and Thad McHaney, athlete Eric Samuels, running backs Warren Norman and Zac Stacy and wide receiver Brady Brown.

TOP 20 INCOMING RECRUITS

RK	NAME	HT/WT	POS	HOMETOWN/SCHOOL	COLLEGE
1.	Bryce Brown	6-0/215	RB	Wichita (Kan.) Wichita East	Tennessee
2.	Rueben Randle	6-3/195	WR	Bastrop (La.) High	LSU
3.	D.J. Fluker	6-7/350	OL	Foley (Ala.) High	Alabama
4.	Trent Richardson	5-11/210	RB	Pensacola (Fla.) Escambia	Alabama
5.	Russell Shepard	6-1/179	QB	Houston Cypress Ridge	LSU
6.	Jelani Jenkins	6-2/220	LB	Olney (Md.) Our Lady Of Good Counsel	Florida
7.	Dre Kirkpatrick	6-2/180	DB	Gadsden (Ala.) Gadsden City	Alabama
8.	Janzen Jackson	6-0/174	DB	Lake Charles (La.) Barbe	Tennessee
9.	Craig Loston	6-2/193	DB	Aldine (Texas) Eisenhower	LSU
10.	Andre Debose	6-0/170	WR	Sanford (Fla.) Seminole	Florida
11.	Gary Brown	6-3/275	DT	Quincy (Fla.) West Gadsden	Florida
12.	Darius Winston	6-0/180	DB	West Helena (Ark.) Central	Arkansas
13.	Chris Davenport	6-4/318	DT	Mansfield (La.) High	LSU
14.	Branden Smith	5-11/171	DB	Atlanta Washington	Georgia
15.	Nico Johnson	6-3/226	LB	Andalusia (Ala.) High	Alabama
16.	Bobby Massie	6-8/335	OL	Chatham (Va.) Hargrave Military Academy	Ole Miss
17.	Xavier Nixon	6-6/263	OL	Fayetteville (N.C.) Jack Britt	Florida
18.	Aaron Murray	6-0/198	QB	Tampa Plant	Georgia
19.	Chris Faulk	6-6/310	OL	Slidell (La.) Northshore	LSU
20.	Patrick Patterson	6-3/215	WR	Macon (Miss.) Noxubee County	Ole Miss

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR:

There were several outstanding newcomers in the SEC in 2008, and none played bigger than wide receivers Julio Jones and A.J. Green. This season, expect another receiver — LSU's Rueben Randle — to be an impact freshman. He has outstanding size (6-3/190), speed, quickness, hands and athleticism.

TOP SLEEPER:

A prospect to keep an eye on is Vanderbilt's Zac Stacy. He should add some big-play ability to the Commodores' offense. He has good speed and quickness, and he will surprise you with his power. Stacy is tough between the tackles and can catch the ball out of the backfield.

LIKELY TO BE THE BEST NFL PLAYER:

This is a tough call because there are so many elite prospects headed to the SEC, but there's a reason running back Bryce Brown was the top prospect in the country. Brown is a versatile back with outstanding size, speed, quickness and athleticism. Brown can run with power or make a defender miss.

NO. 1 SIGNING COUP:

The biggest were Tennessee's, and the Vols had several: cornerback Janzen Jackson, wide receiver Nu'Keese Richardson, athlete Marsalis Teague. But none were bigger in the country than the Big Orange landing Bryce Brown.

BIGGEST MISS:

For two consecutive years, Alabama has dominated in-state over archrival Auburn. This year, the Tide signed the state's top seven prospects. In 2008, it was 14 of the state's top 20 from Alabama. New Tigers coach Gene Chizik and his staff have to do a better job of in-state recruiting. They can't let their archrival control the state.

BEST RECRUITING STAFF:

If this first class for Lane Kiffin is any indication of what he and his staff will do in terms of recruiting, then the SEC just got a whole lot tougher and Tennessee will become a recruiting super-power. Kiffin was an ace recruiter at USC. His dad, defensive coordinator Monte Kiffin, will attract great defensive prospects on reputation alone. Defensive line coach/recruiting coordinator Ed Orgeron is known as one of the nation's best. Linebacker coach Lance Thompson and running backs coach Eddie Gran are known as outstanding recruiters. Wide receiver coach Frank Wilson and quarterback coach David Reaves are two young guys who are hungry. And let's not forget offensive coordinator/line coach Jim Chaney.

FLORIDA GATORS

NATIONAL RANK 1

SEC rank: 1 | Record: 13-1 | SEC record: 7-1 (1st, East) | Stadium: Ben Hill Griffin Stadium (88,548)

Gators in A Box

COACH: Urban Meyer — At Florida: 44-9, 4 years; overall: 83-17, 8 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Steve Addazio
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Charlie Strong
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2008
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 1990
RETURNING STARTERS: 20; 7 offense, 11 defense, punter, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Tim Tebow, RB Chris Rainey, TE Aaron Hernandez, PR/KR Brandon James, CB Joe Haden, LB Brandon Spikes, CB Janoris Jenkins, S Major Wright
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: A defense that held OU's record-setting offense to just 14 points returns virtually intact: All but one of the top 22 players are back. Spikes is a game-changer and Haden and Jenkins are shutdown corners. Rainey and RB Jeff Demps give the Gators big-play potential and Tebow is, well, Tebow.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Gators need someone to step up at receiver. Riley Cooper and David Nelson are solid players but don't scare defenses. Deonte Thompson is the most likely candidate, but young players such as T.J. Lawrence, Frankie Hammond and super-recruit Andre Debose will have to contribute.

OFFENSE

Tim Tebow, the Heisman winner in 2007 and the runner-up last season, spent the offseason working on his mechanics with new quarterbacks coach Scot Loeffler. That should make the career 65.8 percent passer even more dangerous.

Tailbacks Jeff Demps and Chris Rainey are big plays waiting to happen. They each averaged 7.8 yards per carry and combined for 14 runs or receptions of 30 or more yards last season.

Center Sam Robey won the starting job in the spring, moving Maurkice Pouncey from center to left guard. Left tackle Carl Johnson, right guard Mike Pouncey and right tackle Marcus Gilbert round out the line.

Tight end Aaron Hernandez was UF's third-leading receiver last season (34 catches) after being pressed into duty because of a knee injury to starter Cornelius Ingram. He followed a successful '08 with the best offseason of his career.

The receivers are the biggest question. Riley Cooper has just 30 catches in 37 career games. David Nelson came on strong late last season — 10 of his 12 catches and three of his five TDs came in the last four games — but he is strictly a possession receiver. Deonte Thompson is No. 3, but he hasn't been in a must-produce role yet.

Former junior college transfer Carl Moore had a good spring. Redshirt freshmen Frankie Hammond, T.J. Lawrence and Omarius Hines are talented but unproven.

The wildcard is freshman Andre Debose, one of the most sought-after recruits in the country.

DEFENSE

The Gators return 21 of the 22 players on the two-deep depth chart from a defense that stumped OU's record-setting offense in the BCS title game.

The secondary might be the best in school history. Joe Haden and Janoris Jenkins are lockdown corners headed for the NFL. Two safeties with NFL potential (Will Hill, Dee Finley) are back-ups to Ahmad Black and Major Wright.

In addition, UF will have to find playing time for safety Dorian Munroe and cornerbacks Adrian Bushell and Jeremy Brown.

There's plenty of depth at linebacker, too. Brandon Spikes, Brandon Hicks and Ryan Stamper are the starters, but their backups include two former starters (Dustin Doe, A.J. Jones).

Tackles Lawrence Marsh and Terron Sanders developed into solid players and should hold onto their starting jobs, but the rotation at tackle is much deeper than last season. That's because of the emergence of Omar Hunter in the spring, a finally-healthy Brandon Antwine (back, right knee), and the arrival of big-time recruit Gary Brown.

Ends Carlos Dunlap and Jermaine Cunningham combined for 15.5 sacks last season.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker Jonathan Phillips was awarded an extra year by the NCAA and he is coming off a season in which he made 12 of 13 field-goal tries and went 78 for 79 on PATs. Punter Chas Henry's 43.4 average was third in the SEC last season, and he has a knack for delivering the big kick when necessary.

Brandon James is already the school's record-holder with four career punt returns for touchdowns.

OVERVIEW

The obvious preseason No. 1, Florida has all the components for a third national title in four years: great defense, leadership, experience, outstanding special teams, a veteran quarterback and playmakers on offense. Another big benefit is a schedule that has potentially only two tough games: LSU and Georgia.

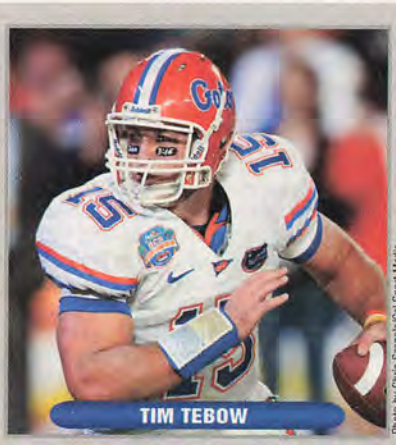

TIM TEBOW

Photo by Chris Szagola/Cal Sport Media

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Tim Tebow***	**6-3**	**245**	**Sr.**
	John Brantley	6-3	217	So.
RB	**Jeff Demps***	**5-8**	**183**	**So.**
	Chris Rainey	5-9	175	So.
WR	**Riley Cooper***	**6-3**	**215**	**Sr.**
	T.J. Lawrence	6-1	196	Fr.
WR	David Nelson	6-5	212	Sr.
	Carl Moore	6-3	225	Sr.
WR	Deonte Thompson	6-0	201	So.
	Frankie Hammond Jr.	6-0	175	Fr.
TE	**Aaron Hernandez***	**6-2**	**250**	**Jr.**
	Desmond Parks	6-4	233	Fr.
LT	**Carl Johnson***	**6-5**	**342**	**Jr.**
	Matt Patchan	6-6	260	So.
LG	**Maurkice Pouncey***	**6-5**	**318**	**Jr.**
	James Wilson	6-5	329	So.
C	Sam Robey	6-4	291	Fr.
	Maurkice Pouncey	6-5	318	Jr.
RG	**Mike Pouncey***	**6-5**	**320**	**Jr.**
	Maurice Hurt	6-2	305	Jr.
RT	Marcus Gilbert	6-5	320	Jr.
	Nick Alajajian	6-4	288	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Justin Trattou***	**6-3**	**264**	**Jr.**
	Carlos Dunlap	6-6	290	Jr.
DT	**Terron Sanders***	**6-2**	**309**	**Jr.**
	Troy Epps	6-0	306	Sr.
DT	**Lawrence Marsh***	**6-4**	**304**	**Jr.**
	Omar Hunter	6-0	308	So.
DE	**Jermaine Cunningham***	**6-3**	**252**	**Sr.**
	William Green	6-3	235	So.
LB	**Ryan Stamper***	**6-2**	**235**	**Jr.**
	Dustin Doe	6-0	231	Sr.
LB	**Brandon Spikes***	**6-3**	**258**	**Sr.**
	Ryan Stamper	6-2	235	Jr.
LB	**Brandon Hicks***	**6-2**	**221**	**Jr.**
	A.J. Jones	6-1	226	Jr.
CB	**Joe Haden***	**5-11**	**190**	**Jr.**
	Adrian Bushell	5-10	180	Fr.
CB	**Janoris Jenkins***	**5-11**	**188**	**So.**
	Jeremy Brown	5-10	182	Fr.
SS	**Ahmad Black***	**5-9**	**185**	**Jr.**
	Dorian Munroe	5-11	205	Sr.
FS	**Major Wright***	**6-0**	**204**	**Jr.**
	Will Hill	6-1	202	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Jonathan Phillips***	**5-10**	**218**	**Sr.**
P	**Chas Henry***	**6-3**	**222**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	CHARLESTON SOUTHERN
Sept. 12	TROY
Sept. 19	TENNESSEE
Sept. 26	at Kentucky
Oct. 10	at LSU
Oct. 17	ARKANSAS
Oct. 24	at Mississippi State
Oct. 31	vs. Georgia (Jacksonville)
Nov. 7	VANDERBILT
Nov. 14	at South Carolina
Nov. 21	FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
Nov. 28	FLORIDA STATE

2008 Results

(13-1, 7-1)

W	HAWAII	56-10
W	MIAMI	26-3
W	at Tennessee	30-6
L	OLE MISS	30-31
W	at Arkansas	38-7
W	LSU	51-21
W	KENTUCKY	63-5
W	vs. Georgia	49-10
W	at Vanderbilt	42-14
W	SOUTH CAROLINA	56-6
W	THE CITADEL	70-19
W	at Florida State	45-15
	SEC Championship Game	
W	vs. Alabama	31-20
	BCS Title Game	
W	vs. Oklahoma	24-14

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	43.6	4
Rushing	231.1	10
Passing	213.9	61
Total	445.1	15
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	12.9	4
Rushing	105.4	15
Passing	179.9	20
Total	285.3	9
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 22	+ 1.57	2

LSU TIGERS

NATIONAL RANK 6

SEC rank: 2 | Record: 8-5 | SEC record: 3-5 (3rd, West) | Stadium: Tiger Stadium (92,400)

Tigers in A Box

COACH: Les Miles — At LSU: 42-11, 4 years; overall: 70-32, 8 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Gary Crowton
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: John Chavis
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2007
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 1999
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 7 offense, 6 defense
PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Charles Scott, WR Brandon LaFell, OT Ciron Black, QB Jordan Jefferson, LB Kelvin Sheppard, LB Perry Riley, CB Patrick Peterson, FS Chad Jones
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The skilled offense has numerous weapons. Jefferson gained valuable experience last season and can better utilize the powerful Scott and the explosive LaFell. Few are better at protecting quarterbacks and opening holes than Black. Athleticism runs deep throughout the offense.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The defensive line wasn't very strong last season and it returns only one starter. The secondary and linebackers were suspect, but should show improvement. Three new defensive coaches indicate an effort to work toward that goal.

OFFENSE

Sophomore Jordan Jefferson should provide the stability at quarterback that was missing last year.

Injuries cleared the way for Jefferson late last season. He started the regular-season finale and the 38-3 Chick-fil-A Bowl win over Georgia Tech.

Jefferson finished the season completing 36 of 73 passes for 419 yards, with four touchdowns and an interception. He said he will be "able to bring more to the team" this year due to of his improved comprehension of the playbook.

He'll have plenty of help, particularly from left tackle Ciron Black, powerful running back Charles Scott and receiver Brandon LaFell.

Scott's 1,174 rushing yards last season was fifth best in school history. He's a bruising runner who can get the tough yards, yet has breakaway speed.

Lafell has led LSU in receiving each of the past two years and has a chance to finish his career ranked among LSU's top 10 leaders in receptions, yards and touchdowns.

He caught an SEC-best eight touchdown passes last season while finishing with 63 receptions for 929 yards.

Also back is rugged senior tight end Richard Dickson, LSU's third-leading receiver last season.

DEFENSE

New coordinator John Chavis has already created a new look. Strong safety Harry Coleman moved to outside linebacker in the spring, and Chavis has cut down on the number of revolving personnel changes that seemed to stymie LSU last season.

Chavis joined LSU after 14 years in the same position at Tennessee.

Coleman was the most consistent and aggressive of LSU's defenders last year when he accumulated a team-high 71 tackles.

Coleman joins a linebacking corps that features junior strongside linebacker Kelvin Sheppard, senior middle linebacker Jacob Cutrera and senior outside linebacker Perry Riley.

First-year secondary coach Ron Cooper welcomes back starting cornerbacks in sophomore Patrick Peterson and senior Chris Hawkins. Peterson came on strong in starting the final four games of last season and provided further indication of his prowess with a 69-yard interception return for a touchdown on the final play of the spring game.

Gifted junior safety Chad Jones is ready to fulfill the promise of the past two years.

Senior tackle Charles Alexander is the line's only returning starter.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Elusive senior Trindon Holliday, a five-time All-American in track through his first three seasons, has put that speed to good use on the football field. He's the only player in school history to return two kickoffs for touchdowns.

There will be a new placekicker (Josh Jasper) and punter (Derek Helton). Jasper made two field goals in last year's season opener and will continue to kick off. Helton averaged 36.1 yards per punt at Fort Scott (Kan.) Community College last season. His longest was 68 yards.

OVERVIEW

The development of quarterback Jordan Jefferson makes many things possible, and LSU shouldn't have any trouble scoring points while staying away from the numerous turnovers that plagued it last season. The defense must exhibit more consistency and less vulnerability to the pass and yielding big plays. If the defense, thin in spots, holds up, the Tigers will be going to the SEC title game.

Photo by Bruce L. Schwartzman

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Jordan Jefferson	6-4	209	So.
	Jarrett Lee*	**6-2**	**216**	**So.**
RB	**Charles Scott***	**5-11**	**233**	**Sr.**
	Richard Murphy	6-1	196	Jr.
RB	Keiland Williams	5-11	229	Sr.
	Stevan Ridley	5-11	212	So.
WR	**Brandon LaFell***	**6-3**	**209**	**Sr.**
	Tim Molton	6-3	173	Fr.
WR	Terrance Tolliver	6-4	194	Jr.
	Chris Mitchell	6-0	179	Sr.
TE	**Richard Dickson***	**6-3**	**246**	**Sr.**
	Mitch Joseph	6-5	261	So.
LT	**Ciron Black***	**6-5**	**325**	**Sr.**
	Thomas Parsons	6-5	276	Fr.
LG	Josh Dworaczyk	6-6	286	So.
	Will Blackwell	6-4	298	So.
C	T-Bob Hebert	6-3	282	So.
	Patrick Lonergan	6-4	288	Fr.
RG	**Lyle Hitt***	**6-2**	**289**	**Sr.**
	Greg Shaw	6-5	290	So.
RT	**Joseph Barksdale***	**6-5**	**315**	**Jr.**
	Cordian Hagans	6-4	285	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Lazarius Levingston	6-4	269	Jr.
	Chase Clement	6-5	255	Fr.
DT	**Charles Alexander***	**6-3**	**310**	**Sr.**
	Lavar Edwards	6-4	280	Fr.
DT	Al Woods	6-4	323	Sr.
	Drake Nevis	6-1	294	Jr.
DE	Rahim Alem	6-3	254	Sr.
	Sidell Corley	6-3	274	So.
LB	**Perry Riley***	**6-1**	**240**	**Sr.**
	Shomari Clemons	6-1	232	So.
LB	Jacob Cutrera	6-4	236	Sr.
	Ryan Baker	6-0	213	So.
LB	**Kelvin Sheppard***	**6-3**	**237**	**Jr.**
	Harry Coleman*	**6-2**	**205**	**Sr.**
CB	**Chris Hawkins***	**6-1**	**184**	**Sr.**
	Ron Brooks	5-11	175	So.
CB	**Patrick Peterson***	**6-1**	**205**	**So.**
	Jai Eugene	5-11	191	Jr.
SS	Danny McCray	6-1	212	Sr.
	Stefoin Francois	6-1	194	So.
FS	Chad Jones	6-3	214	Jr.
	Karnell Hatcher	6-1	196	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Josh Jasper	5-11	165	Jr.
P	Derek Helton	6-2	170	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	at Washington
Sept. 12	VANDERBILT
Sept. 19	LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE
Sept. 26	at Mississippi State
Oct. 3	at Georgia
Oct. 10	FLORIDA
Oct. 24	AUBURN
Oct. 31	TULANE
Nov. 7	at Alabama
Nov. 14	LOUISIANA TECH
Nov. 21	at Ole Miss
Nov. 28	ARKANSAS

2008 Results

(8-5, 3-5)

W	APPALACHIAN STATE	41-13
W	NORTH TEXAS	41-3
W	at Auburn	26-21
W	MISSISSIPPI STATE	34-24
L	at Florida	21-51
W	at South Carolina	24-17
L	GEORGIA	38-52
W	TULANE	35-10
L	ALABAMA (OT)	21-27
W	TROY	40-31
L	OLE MISS	13-31
L	at Arkansas (Little Rock)	30-31
	Chick-fil-A Bowl	
W	vs. Georgia Tech	38-3

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	30.9	30
Rushing	166.8	43
Passing	201.3	71
Total	368.1	55
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.2	56
Rushing	110.2	17
Passing	215.4	73
Total	325.5	32
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 1	- 0.08	67

ALABAMA CRIMSON TIDE

NATIONAL RANK 7

SEC rank: 3 | Record: 12-2 | SEC record: 8-0 (1st, West) | Stadium: Bryant-Denney Stadium (92,138)

Crimson Tide in A Box

COACH: Nick Saban — At Alabama: 19-8, 2 years; overall: 110-50-1, 13 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jim McElwain
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kirby Smart
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1999
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2003
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 4 offense, 9 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: WR Julio Jones, NT Terrence Cody, LB Rolando McClain, LB Dont'a Hightower, DB/KR Javier Arenas, RB Mark Ingram
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The front seven on defense is experienced, while the second unit has more raw talent. Cody is an immovable force; McClain is a potential All-American; and Hightower can do whatever is asked. This could be an even better unit than a year ago.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Tide struggled last year in games without starting LT Andre Smith and he is gone as is C Antoine Caldwell. And if QB Greg McElroy goes down, the offense will have to be scaled back considerably for his replacement.

OFFENSE

Greg McElroy waited for three years as John Parker Wilson set practically every school passing record. That patience paid off, as he clearly emerged from spring practice as the starting quarterback.

McElroy, a junior, is not as big as Wilson or as physical, and he doesn't have the arm strength. But he knows how to manage the game and might have better touch on the deep ball.

That will come in handy with a receiving corps that includes Julio Jones, Marquis Maze, Darius Hanks, Mike McCoy and tight end Colin Peek.

Jones is sensational. He is a big-body pass catcher who is unafraid to go across the middle, and he has the speed to turn a short route into a long gain. Maze, the fastest player on the team, is a legit deep threat who will take some of the defensive pressure off Jones.

But it's not as if Nick Saban is suddenly going to turn this into a pass-happy offense. He'd like to establish the same kind of ball-control offense he had last season.

He needs incoming freshman Trent Richardson, one of the most sought-after backs in the country, to step into the role held by last year's leading rusher, Glen Coffee. Mark Ingram, who set a freshman record with 12 rushing touchdowns last year, could also be the No. 1 back.

Replacing a veteran line is the team's biggest question mark.

All-American left tackle Andre Smith is gone. Junior college transfer James Carpenter emerged as the frontrunner in the spring, although huge freshman D.J. Fluker could step in immediately the way Smith did as a freshman three years ago.

DEFENSE

Anchored by two potential first-round NFL draft choices in mammoth nose tackle Terrence Cody and linebacker Rolando McClain, the front seven is big, athletic and experienced. The second unit might be even more athletic.

Sophomore Dont'a Hightower starts as an inside linebacker in the base 3-4 scheme but will drop down to end as a pass rusher in obvious passing situations. He's also fast enough to get 25 yards down field to cover receivers in a zone defense.

In the secondary, Kareem Jackson, Javier Arenas and Justin Woodall are returning starters. Mark Barron was expected to replace last year's leader, Rashad Johnson, but sophomore Robby Green emerged in the spring to challenge for one safety spot.

Given how much Saban likes to go to nickel and dime packages, there should be plenty of playing time for these defensive backs, who might have their hands full holding off incoming freshmen Dre Kirkpatrick and Nico Johnson.

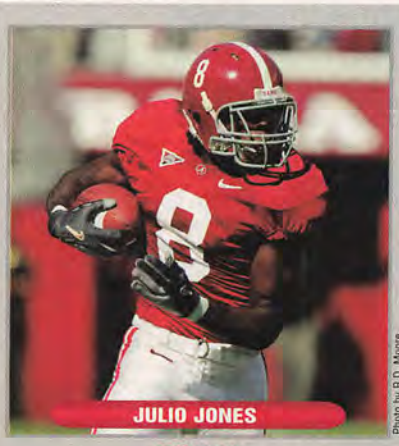
SPECIAL TEAMS

Arenas led the SEC with 650 yards in punt returns, returning three for touchdowns. He also averaged 23.6 yards per kickoff return.

Senior Leigh Tiffin hit 20 of 29 field goals last year, ranking sixth in the SEC in scoring. P.J. Fitzgerald has been the Tide's starting punter in every game for the past three seasons. He averaged 41.1 yards per kick last year.

OVERVIEW

After back-to-back recruiting classes that ranked at or near the top in the country, this team is deeper than ever. The schedule is favorable. If a strong running game emerges, Alabama could do exactly what it did last year — except that this time, everyone will be looking for the Tide, so there won't be any sneaking up on opponents.



JULIO JONES

Photo by R.D. Moore

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Greg McElroy	6-2	220	Jr.
	Thomas Darrah	6-6	212	So.
RB	Mark Ingram	5-10	215	So.
	Trent Richardson	5-11	220	Fr.
WR	**Julio Jones***	**6-4**	**210**	**So.**
	Kendall Kelly	6-3	215	Fr.
WR	Marquis Maze	5-9	171	So.
	Mike McCoy*	**6-2**	**205**	**Sr.**
WR	Darius Hanks	6-0	172	Jr.
	Kenny Bell	6-1	160	Fr.
TE	Colin Peek	6-6	247	Sr.
	Brad Smelley	6-3	218	So.
LT	D.J. Fluker	6-5	340	Fr.
	James Carpenter	6-5	305	Jr.
LG	**Mike Johnson***	**6-6**	**305**	**Sr.**
	Brian Motley	6-2	289	Jr.
C	William Vlachos	6-0	305	Jr.
	David Ross	6-3	295	Jr.
RG	John Michael Boswell	6-5	300	So.
	Chance Warmack	6-3	325	Fr.
RT	**Drew Davis***	**6-7**	**305**	**Sr.**
	Tyler Love	6-7	290	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Brandon Deaderick***	**6-4**	**287**	**Sr.**
	Kerry Murphy	6-5	315	Fr.
NT	**Terrence Cody***	**6-5**	**365**	**Sr.**
	Josh Chapman	6-1	305	So.
DE	Lorenzo Washington	6-5	275	Sr.
	Marcell Dareus	6-3	280	So.
LB	**Cory Reamer***	**6-4**	**218**	**Sr.**
	Jerrell Harris	6-3	215	So.
LB	**Rolando McClain***	**6-4**	**249**	**Jr.**
	Nico Johnson	6-3	225	Fr.
LB	**Dont'a Hightower***	**6-4**	**250**	**So.**
	Chris Jordan	6-2	220	So.
LB	**Brandon Fanney***	**6-4**	**257**	**Sr.**
	Courtney Upshaw	6-2	230	So.
CB	**Javier Arenas***	**5-9**	**198**	**Sr.**
	Dre' Kirkpatrick	6-3	185	Fr.
CB	**Kareem Jackson***	**5-11**	**192**	**Jr.**
	Alonzo Lawrence	6-1	190	Fr.
SS	**Justin Woodall***	**6-2**	**220**	**Sr.**
	Mark Barron	6-2	215	So.
FS	Robby Green	6-0	180	So.
	Ali Sharrief	5-9	205	Sr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Leigh Tiffin***	**6-1**	**199**	**Sr.**
P	**P.J. Fitzgerald***	**5-11**	**198**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	vs. Virginia Tech (Atlanta)
Sept. 12	FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
Sept. 19	NORTH TEXAS
Sept. 26	ARKANSAS
Oct. 3	at Kentucky
Oct. 10	at Ole Miss
Oct. 17	SOUTH CAROLINA
Oct. 24	TENNESSEE
Nov. 7	LSU
Nov. 14	at Mississippi State
Nov. 21	CHATTANOOGA
Nov. 27	at Auburn

2008 Results

	(12-2,8-0)	
W	vs. Clemson (Atlanta)	34-10
W	TULANE	20-6
W	WESTERN KENTUCKY	41-7
W	at Arkansas	49-14
W	at Georgia	41-30
W	KENTUCKY	17-14
W	OLE MISS	24-20
W	at Tennessee	29-9
W	ARKANSAS STATE	35-0
W	at LSU (OT)	27-21
W	MISSISSIPPI STATE	32-7
W	AUBURN	36-0
	SEC Championship game	
L	vs. Florida	20-31
	Sugar Bowl	
L	vs. Utah	17-31

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	30.1	35
Rushing	184.6	30
Passing	171.1	97
Total	355.8	63
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	14.3	7
Rushing	74.1	2
Passing	189.4	30
Total	263.5	3
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 6	+ 0.43	32

OLE MISS REBELS

NATIONAL RANK 9

SEC rank: 4 | Record: 9-4 | SEC record: 5-3 (2nd, West) | Stadium: Vaught-Hemingway (60,580)

Rebels in A Box

COACH: Houston Nutt — At Ole Miss: 9-4, 1 year; overall: 120-74, 16 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kent Austin
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tyrone Nix
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1963
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 7 offense, 8 defense, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Jevan Snead, OL John Jerry, WR Dexter McCluster, WR Shay Hodge, DE Greg Hardy, DE Kentrell Lockett, LB Patrick Trahan, DB Kendrick Lewis
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Rebels return most of their skill position players from an offense that scored more than 32 points per game last season. An experienced defense also returns, anchored by a very deep defensive line. Snead could emerge as one of the nation's best.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Ole Miss is a little thin on the offensive line, especially at left tackle, where the team is trying to replace All-American Michael Oher. The Rebels are average in the secondary and need continued improvement from their cornerbacks.

OFFENSE

The vast majority of playmakers return from an offense that averaged more than 32 points per game last season.

At the forefront is quarterback Jevan Snead, who threw for 2,762 yards, 26 touchdowns and 13 interceptions in his first season with the Rebels.

The Rebels return their top four running backs, each of whom rushed for at least 240 yards last season. Sophomore Brandon Bolden, who rushed for 542 yards as a true freshman, separated himself from the pack in the spring.

Seniors Dexter McCluster and Shay Hodge will anchor the receiving unit.

McCluster, who is only 5-8, 165 pounds, rushed for 655 yards and six touchdowns while also catching 44 passes for 625 yards and a touchdown last season. He's the key in the "Wild Rebel" direct-snap formation. Hodge led the team with eight touchdown receptions.

The Rebels return three veterans — guard Reid Neely, center Daverin Geralds and right tackle John Jerry — on the line, but must find a way to replace All-American left tackle Michael Oher. Sophomore Bradley Sowell is the most likely candidate.

DEFENSE

The Rebels' strength is their front four, which is still impressive even after the departure of All-American defensive tackle Peria Jerry.

Greg Hardy, Kentrell Lockett, Marcus Tillman, Lawon Scott, Ted Laurent, Jerrell Powe and Emmanuel Stephens all return from a line that helped the Rebels tie for the nation's lead in tackles for loss last season with 111.

Ole Miss should also be very good again at linebacker, where senior Patrick Trahan and juniors Jonathan Cornell and Allen Walker will start after contributing heavily last season. Coaches are most impressed with Trahan, who had 29 tackles in limited time last season despite reporting to camp out of shape after a season at Northwest Mississippi Community College.

A pair of redshirt freshmen — Jason Jones and Lekenwic Haynes — along with senior Lamar Brumfield will be counted on to provide depth at linebacker.

The Rebels return three starters in the secondary, but that's not all good news. Ole Miss ranked last in the SEC in passing defense last season, giving up more than 221 yards per game.

Safety Kendrick Lewis led the team with 85 tackles and four interceptions last season, while seniors Cassius Vaughn and Marshay Green will start again at cornerback.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Rebels have one of the nation's most consistent kickers in senior Joshua Shene, who was named first-team All-SEC last season by the Associated Press and is the SEC's active career field goal leader with 42. Senior Justin Sparks will take over the punting responsibilities.

Ole Miss will be searching for a quality kickoff return man to replace Mike Wallace, who was the school's career leader in return yards. Likely candidates include Brandon Bolden, Devin Thomas and Lionel Breaux.

Marshay Green is back after returning 35 punts for an average of 10.9 yards and one touchdown.

OUTLOOK

Coach Houston Nutt changed the team's outlook in his first season and he has several stars returning from last year's team that finished 9-4 and won the Cotton Bowl. Ole Miss, which is experiencing expectations that haven't been seen around Oxford in years, figure to be a real factor in the race for the SEC Western Division title. But depth remains a concern, especially on the offensive line.

JEVAN SNEED

Photo by R.D. Moore

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Jevan Snead***	**6-3**	**215**	**Jr.**
	Billy Tapp	6-4	230	Sr.
RB	Brandon Bolden	5-11	220	So.
	Cordera Eason	5-10	224	Sr.
WR	**Dexter McCluster***	**5-8**	**165**	**Sr.**
	Andrew Harris	6-2	200	So.
WR	**Shay Hodge***	**6-1**	**207**	**Sr.**
	Markeith Summers	6-2	197	Jr.
WR	Lionel Breaux	6-0	191	Jr.
	Jacarious Lucas	6-2	188	Sr.
TE	**Gerald Harris***	**6-5**	**250**	**Sr.**
	Reggie Hicks	6-1	234	Jr.
LT	Bradley Sowell	6-7	310	So.
	Alex Washington	6-4	337	So.
LG	**Reid Neely***	**6-6**	**310**	**Sr.**
	Brandon Green	6-2	300	Sr.
C	**Daverin Geralds***	**6-2**	**312**	**Sr.**
	Mark Jean-Louis	6-2	355	Sr.
RG	Rishaw Johnson	6-4	295	So.
	A.J. Hawkins	6-3	315	Fr.
RT	**John Jerry***	**6-5**	**350**	**Sr.**
	Logan Clair	6-5	305	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Kentrell Lockett***	**6-5**	**240**	**Jr.**
	Emmanuel Stephens	6-3	235	Sr.
DT	**Ted Laurent***	**6-0**	**303**	**Jr.**
	Jerrell Powe	6-2	340	Jr.
DT	Lawon Scott	6-1	322	Jr.
	Justin Smith	6-4	280	So.
DE	**Marcus Tillman***	**6-4**	**260**	**Sr.**
	Greg Hardy	6-4	265	Sr.
LB	**Allen Walker***	**6-1**	**215**	**Jr.**
	Lamar Brumfield	6-0	224	Sr.
LB	**Jonathan Cornell***	**6-1**	**225**	**Jr.**
	Jason Jones	6-2	220	Fr.
LB	Patrick Trahan	6-2	225	Sr.
	Lekenwic Haynes	6-3	205	Fr.
CB	**Cassius Vaughn***	**5-0**	**185**	**Sr.**
	Jeremy McGee	5-10	178	Jr.
CB	**Marshay Green***	**5-9**	**170**	**Sr.**
	Marcus Temple	5-9	181	So.
FS	**Kendrick Lewis***	**5-11**	**192**	**Sr.**
	Fon Ingram	5-11	190	Jr.
SS	Johnny Brown	5-11	207	Jr.
	Derrick Herman	5-11	185	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Joshua Shene***	**5-8**	**170**	**Sr.**
P	Justin Sparks	6-2	187	Sr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 6	at Memphis
Sept. 19	SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA
Sept. 24	at South Carolina
Oct. 3	at Vanderbilt
Oct. 10	ALABAMA
Oct. 17	UAB
Oct. 24	ARKANSAS
Oct. 31	at Auburn
Nov. 7	NORTHERN ARIZONA
Nov. 14	TENNESSEE
Nov. 21	LSU
Nov. 28	at Mississippi State

2008 Results

(9-4, 5-3)

W	MEMPHIS	41-24
L	at Wake Forest	28-30
W	SAMFORD	34-10
L	VANDERBILT	17-23
W	at Florida	31-30
L	SOUTH CAROLINA	24-31
L	at Alabama	20-24
W	at Arkansas	23-21
W	AUBURN	17-7
W	LOUISIANA-MONROE	59-0
W	at LSU	31-13
W	MISSISSIPPI STATE	45-0
	Cotton Bowl	
W	vs. Texas Tech	47-34

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	32.1	28
Rushing	186.5	28
Passing	221.2	53
Total	407.6	29
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	19.0	20
Rushing	85.5	4
Passing	221.7	81
Total	307.2	19
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 2	-0.15	72

GEORGIA BULLDOGS

NATIONAL RANK 17

SEC rank: 5 | Record: 10-3 | SEC record: 6-2 (2nd, East) | Stadium: Sanford Stadium (92,746)

Bulldogs in A Box

COACH: Mark Richt — At Georgia and overall: 82-22, 8 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Bobo
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Willie Martinez
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2005
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 1996
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 7 offense, 6 defense, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Joe Cox, WR A.J. Green, RB Caleb King, DT Geno Atkins, LB Rennie Curran, LB Darryl Gamble, FS Reshad Jones.
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Georgia has depth and experience on the offensive line, which should be the best in the SEC, and the offense has a game-changer with super sophomore Green. The defense features quality tackles, linebackers and a playmaker in Jones.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The quarterbacks and running backs are largely unproven and are replacing superstars. There is no apparent dominant defensive end. Not much depth in the secondary. Several starters across the board missed spring practice.

OFFENSE

New starting quarterback Joe Cox doesn't have a rocket arm, but he's extremely accurate and knows the offense thoroughly. So don't expect much to change in play-calling after Matthew Stafford left early and became the No. 1 pick in the NFL Draft.

Likewise, even with Knowshon Moreno gone, the running game won't change much. Caleb King seems to be the clear-cut starter. But Dontavius Jackson, Richard Samuel and Carlton Thomas all have some ability. Freshman Washaun Ealey, if he's eligible, could beat out all of them, King notwithstanding.

"We've rushed for somewhere between 2,000 and 2,300 yards every year," coach Mark Richt said. "I'm sure we will be somewhere in that range."

The Dawgs return eight offensive linemen who have started over the past two years, not including Kiante Tripp, who moved back to defense. Left tackle Clint Boling, versatile enough to play all spots except center, has developed into a leader on the offensive line.

If left tackle Trinton Sturdivant, who missed last season with an ACL injury, comes back healthy in the fall, Boling could end up at guard.

Even with the loss of Mohamed Massaquoi and a season-ending injury to Kris Durham, there's plenty of talent at receiver. The most gifted is A.J. Green, who caught 56 passes as a true freshman.

"He can do some things other players could never be able to do," Cox said.

DEFENSE

If the Bulldogs are to contend for anything, the defense must make significant improvement.

Richt faithfully stood behind defensive coordinator Willie Martinez, who was vindicated in the Capital One Bowl, a 24-12 victory over Michigan State in which the defense repeatedly bailed out the offense on short fields.

Defensive tackle Jeff Owens returns after missing last season to a knee injury. He and Geno Atkins will give the Bulldogs solid run stuffers in the middle of the line.

The biggest question is at defensive end. Rod Battle missed spring practice. If he's healthy, Battle and Demarcus Dobbs should be adequate.

The linebackers will be the strength of the defense. Rennie Curran is among the best in college football despite his short stature. Akeem Dent moved inside to replace Dannell Ellerbe, opening a starting spot for Darryl Gamble, who returned two interceptions for touchdowns against LSU.

Strong safety Reshad Jones, who had five interceptions last season, leads the secondary.

Bryan Evans moved from cornerback to free safety. Prince Miller is entrenched at one corner. Brandon Boykin and Sanders Commings will battle for the other starting job

SPECIAL TEAMS

Blair Walsh's inconsistency as a freshman — four misses inside 40 yards — could be written off to inexperience. But improving his accuracy is a must for the former high school All-American.

Drew Butler takes over as punter after the graduation of Brian Mimbs.

OVERVIEW

While the Dawgs lost some big-time talent, it's important to remember that all the scholarship players on the roster were members of top 10 signing classes. So there's plenty of talent on the two-deep. There has been a buzz from Athens that the players have something to prove after being labeled underachievers last season.

The bottom line is they should still be in the SEC championship race when they meet Florida in Jacksonville on Halloween.

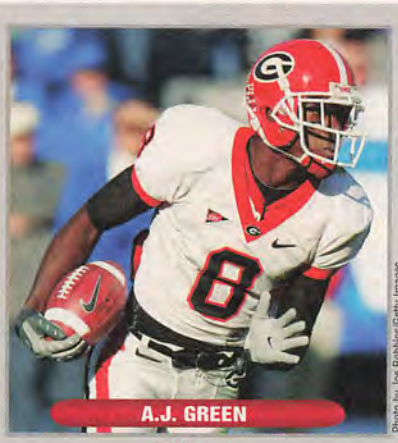

A.J. GREEN

Photo by Joe Robbins/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Joe Cox	6-1	198	Sr.
	Logan Gray	6-2	192	So.
RB	Caleb King	5-11	210	So.
	Washaun Ealey	5-11	205	Fr.
FB	**Shaun Chapas***	**6-2**	**238**	**Jr.**
	Fred Munzenmaier	6-2	224	Jr.
WR	Tavares King	6-1	176	Fr.
	Tony Wilson	5-11	214	Jr.
WR	**A.J. Green***	**6-4**	**207**	**So.**
	Michael Moore	6-2	207	Sr.
TE	Aron White	6-4	225	So.
	Bruce Figgins	6-4	260	Jr.
LT	**Clint Boling***	**6-5**	**297**	**Jr.**
	Trinton Sturdivant	6-5	306	So.
LG	**Cordy Glenn***	**6-5**	**331**	**So.**
	Vince Vance	6-8	325	Sr.
C	**Ben Jones***	**6-3**	**294**	**So.**
	Dallas Lee	6-4	293	Fr.
RG	**Chris Davis***	**6-4**	**296**	**Jr.**
	Tanner Strickland	6-5	327	So.
RT	**Justin Anderson***	**6-5**	**328**	**So.**
	Ben Harden	6-3	303	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Demarcus Dobbs	6-2	282	Jr.
	Kiante Tripp	6-6	294	Jr.
DT	Jeff Owens	6-3	306	Sr.
	Kade Weston	6-5	325	Sr.
DT	**Geno Atkins***	**6-1**	**287**	**Sr.**
	DeAngelo Tyson	6-2	294	So.
DE	**Rod Battle***	**6-4**	**259**	**Sr.**
	Justin Houston	6-3	259	So.
LB	Darryl Gamble	6-2	247	Jr.
	Darius Dewberry	6-3	230	Sr.
LB	**Akeem Dent***	**6-2**	**226**	**Jr.**
	Charles White	6-1	220	So.
LB	**Rennie Curran***	**5-11**	**222**	**Jr.**
	Marcus Dowtin	6-2	226	So.
CB	**Prince Miller***	**5-8**	**196**	**Sr.**
	Vance Cuff	5-11	172	Jr.
CB	Brandon Boykin	5-10	182	So.
	Sanders Commings	6-2	214	So.
SS	**Reshad Jones***	**6-2**	**212**	**Jr.**
	Quintin Banks	6-2	210	Jr.
FS	Bryan Evans	5-11	190	Sr.
	John Knox	6-2	205	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Blair Walsh***	**5-10**	**183**	**So.**
P	Drew Butler	6-2	202	So.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	at Oklahoma State
Sept. 12	SOUTH CAROLINA
Sept. 19	at Arkansas
Sept. 26	ARIZONA STATE
Oct. 3	LSU
Oct. 10	at Tennessee
Oct. 17	at Vanderbilt
Oct. 31	vs. Florida (Jacksonville)
Nov. 7	TENNESSEE TECH
Nov. 14	AUBURN
Nov. 21	KENTUCKY
Nov. 28	at Georgia Tech

2008 Results

	(10-3, 6-2)	
W	GEORGIA SOUTHERN	45-21
W	CENTRAL MICHIGAN	56-17
W	at South Carolina	14-7
W	at Arizona State	27-10
L	ALABAMA	30-41
W	TENNESSEE	26-14
W	VANDERBILT	24-14
W	at LSU	52-38
L	vs. Florida	10-49
W	at Kentucky	42-38
W	at Auburn	17-13
L	GEORGIA TECH	42-45
	Capital One Bowl	
W	vs. Michigan State	24-12

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	31.5	29
Rushing	148.3	56
Passing	277.7	16
Total	426.0	22
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.5	59
Rushing	122.3	27
Passing	189.7	32
Total	312.0	22
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 3	- 0.23	73

TENNESSEE VOLUNTEERS

NATIONAL RANK 28

SEC rank: 6 | Record: 5-7 | SEC record: 3-5 (5th, East) | Stadium: Neyland Stadium (104,079)

Volunteers in A Box

COACH: Lane Kiffin — At Tennessee and overall: First year as college head coach
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jim Chaney
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Monte Kiffin
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1998
LAST BOWL: 2007, Outback
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 7 offense, 5 defense, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: WR Gerald Jones, RB Montario Hardesty, DT Dan Williams, DE Chris Walker, S Eric Berry, LB Rico McCoy
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: All-American FS Eric Berry, who led the nation with seven interceptions, heads up a talented secondary. CB Brent Vinson is a great athlete. The defensive ends are also strong. The Vols have depth at running back, but probably not an All-SEC caliber runner ... although there is big hope for the incoming freshmen.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Quarterback play is a concern. The Vols need Jonathan Crompton or B.J. Coleman to be productive. The offensive line had a bad year in 2008, but some of that can be attributed to the scheme. There is not a proven playmaker at receiver. On defense, UT lacks depth at tackle and linebacker.

OFFENSE

Lane Kiffin, formerly of the Oakland Raiders, made comments that offended Florida, Alabama, Mississippi State and South Carolina within months after being hired as Tennessee's coach.

He got everybody's attention off the field. Now, he has to make it happen on the field.

With a star-studded coaching staff and a top 10 recruiting class, Kiffin set to work in the spring on improving Tennessee's worst offense since 1964.

Jonathan Crompton, the No. 2 rated quarterback in the country coming out of high school, practiced well last season, according to the former coaches, but played poorly in games. Crompton has a strong arm and has shown flashes of passing skills, but his decision-making has come under question. Kiffin praised Crompton for playing well much of the spring.

Other quarterback candidates are B.J. Coleman and Nick Stephens.

Tennessee is strong at tailback. Senior Montario Hardesty, injury prone throughout his career, had a solid spring. Tauren Poole was the most productive runner. True freshman Toney Williams displayed good running skills.

The man UT fans are eager to see this fall is Bryce Brown, rated the nation's No. 1 recruit. He and David Oku, rated one of the nation's top five backs, could make immediate impacts.

None of the top four pass catchers last season averaged 13 yards per reception. Denarius Moore averaged 24.6 yards per catch, but had just 11 grabs. Gerald Jones led the team with 30 receptions. Austin Rogers, who caught 56 passes in 2007, was limited to 14 last year.

DEFENSE

Defensive coordinator Monte Kiffin, making a return to college football after 26 years in the NFL, inherits a defense that tied for third in the nation, allowing 263.5 yards per game.

Six starters are gone, but UT returns the SEC Defensive Player of the Year, safety Eric Berry, whose seven interceptions tied for the nation's best.

The rest of the secondary is talented. Brent Vinson started in 2007 at corner; Dennis Rogan started at corner last season. Several others with experience have a chance to start.

The line is set at the ends. Lane Kiffin described Chris Walker as unblockable at times during the spring, while Ben Martin, Willie Bohannon and Steven Fowlkes showed promise.

The tackle position is a concern. Dan Williams, who had 8.5 tackles for loss last year, is an All-SEC caliber player, but the Vols have little other experience. Wes Brown, who started at end last season, was moved to tackle.

True freshman Montori Hughes, who enrolled in January, might be UT's most talented young defensive tackle since Albert Haynesworth.

Tennessee lost two starting linebackers but returns Rico McCoy, who recorded 87 tackles.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Chad Cunningham averaged 39.5 yards per punt during a five-game stint last season, but he had a couple blocked. UT's net average was a mere 34.9 yards.

Junior kicker Daniel Lincoln, a Freshman All-American in 2007, had an off year, making just 10 of 18 field-goal attempts. His long was 47 yards.

OVERVIEW

Tennessee must rebuild from its second losing season in four years, and bringing in a young, brash coach such as Lane Kiffin is definitely stirring things up. The defense, tied for third in the nation a year ago, won't be as stingy, despite adding a quality defensive coordinator. Ultimately, quarterback play will determine if the Vols can immediately compete in the SEC in this new era.

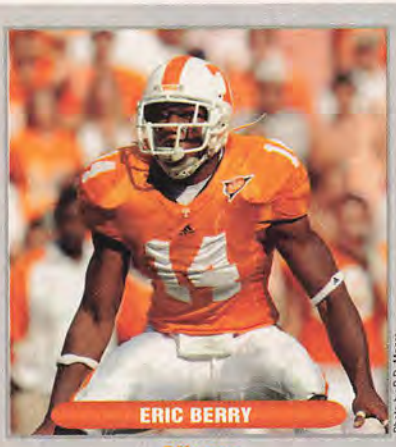

ERIC BERRY

Photo by R.D. Moore

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Jonathan Crompton***	**6-4**	**228**	**Sr.**
	B.J. Coleman	6-3	223	So.
RB	Montario Hardesty	6-0	215	Sr.
	Tauren Poole	5-10	203	So.
FB	Kevin Cooper	6-0	247	Jr.
	Austin Johnson	6-2	234	So.
WR	**Gerald Jones***	**6-0**	**199**	**Jr.**
	Denarius Moore	6-1	190	Jr.
WR	Austin Rogers	6-2	190	Sr.
	Brandon Warren	6-2	216	Jr.
TE	**Luke Stocker***	**6-6**	**240**	**Jr.**
	Jeff Cottam	6-8	260	Sr.
LT	**Chris Scott***	**6-5**	**346**	**Sr.**
	Dallas Thomas	6-5	268	Fr.
LG	**Vladimir Richard***	**6-4**	**300**	**Sr.**
	Jarrod Shaw	6-4	332	Jr.
C	**Josh McNeil***	**6-4**	**280**	**Sr.**
	Cody Sullins	6-1	260	Sr.
RG	**Jacques McClendon***	**6-3**	**324**	**Sr.**
	Cory Sullins	6-1	270	Sr.
RT	Cody Pope	6-6	288	So.
	Aaron Douglas	6-6	282	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Chris Walker	6-3	232	Jr.
	Willie Bohannon	6-2	230	Fr.
DT	**Dan Williams***	**6-3**	**327**	**Sr.**
	Andre Mathis	6-2	280	Sr.
DT	**Wes Brown***	**6-4**	**257**	**Sr.**
	Montori Hughes	6-4	312	Fr.
DE	Ben Martin	6-3	239	Jr.
	Gerald Williams	6-4	248	Jr.
LB	**Rico McCoy***	**6-1**	**220**	**Sr.**
	Shane Reveiz	5-11	200	So.
LB	Nick Reveiz	5-10	220	Jr.
	Herman Lathers	6-1	213	Fr.
LB	LaMarcus Thompson	6-1	221	Jr.
	Savion Frazier	6-2	221	Jr.
CB	Brent Vinson	6-0	201	Jr.
	Art Evans	6-1	173	So.
CB	**Dennis Rogan***	**5-10**	**178**	**Jr.**
	C.J. Fleming	5-10	173	So.
SS	Stephaun Raines	5-10	179	So.
	Rod Wilks	6-0	220	Fr.
FS	**Eric Berry***	**5-11**	**203**	**Jr.**
	Prentiss Waggner	6-2	177	Fr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Daniel Lincoln***	**6-0**	**203**	**Jr.**
P	Chad Cunningham	6-3	198	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	WESTERN KENTUCKY
Sept. 12	UCLA
Sept. 19	at Florida
Sept. 26	OHIO
Oct. 3	AUBURN
Oct. 10	GEORGIA
Oct. 24	at Alabama
Oct. 31	SOUTH CAROLINA
Nov. 7	MEMPHIS
Nov. 14	at Ole Miss
Nov. 21	VANDERBILT
Nov. 28	at Kentucky

2008 Results

(5-7, 3-5)

L	at UCLA (OT)	24-27
W	UAB	35-3
L	FLORIDA	6-30
L	at Auburn	12-14
W	NORTHERN ILLINOIS	13-9
L	at Georgia	14-26
W	MISSISSIPPI STATE	34-3
L	ALABAMA	9-29
L	at South Carolina	6-27
L	WYOMING	7-13
W	at Vanderbilt	20-10
W	KENTUCKY	28-10

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	17.3	110
Rushing	122.9	88
Passing	145.8	107
Total	268.8	115
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	16.8	10
Rushing	103.1	12
Passing	160.4	4
Total	263.5	3
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 2	+ 0.17	47

SOUTH CAROLINA GAMECOCKS

NATIONAL RANK 36

SEC rank: 7 | Record: 7-6 | SEC record: 4-4 (T-3rd, East) | Stadium: Williams-Brice Stadium (80,250)

Gamecocks in A Box

COACH: Steve Spurrier — At South Carolina: 28-22, 4 years; overall: 170-62-2, 19 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Steve Spurrier
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ellis Johnson
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1969, ACC
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 5 offense, 6 defense, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Stephen Garcia, RB Jarvis Giles, LT Jarriel King, DE Cliff Matthews, LB/DE Eric Norwood, CB/QB Stephon Gilmore, CB Akeem Auguste
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Defensive coordinator Ellis Johnson lost a good deal of talent to the NFL, but his 4-2-5 scheme proved to be a success last season. South Carolina doesn't have a lot of secondary depth, but the young starters have sky's-the-limit potential. Starting with QB Stephen Garcia, there is talent at the skill positions.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The offensive skill is far from proven. The Gamecocks need several freshmen, including RB Jarvis Giles and CB Stephon Gilmore, to make immediate contributions, which is always a lot to ask. Per usual under Spurrier, the offensive line is a concern. South Carolina quarterbacks take the blame, but they haven't had much time to throw.

OFFENSE

The Gamecocks are breaking in a whole new set of skill players, and the conversation typically begins with quarterback Stephen Garcia. But the team's running game, which mustered only 94.1 yards per game last season, might be the offense's ignition.

Youth figures to spur the running back position.

True freshman Jarvis Giles showed moves in the spring that the Gamecocks might not have seen before. He is nearly impossible to tackle in the open field and tough to catch on the run.

He'll see carries in a committee with junior Brian Maddox, who rushed only 32 times as a sophomore, sophomore Eric Baker and freshman Kenny Miles.

The athletic Garcia will factor into the rushing offense, too, but it's his arm that will be put to the test. He threw eight interceptions in 122 attempts last season. Coaches want him throwing a lot this summer — about 100 to 120 passes a day, Garcia said. New quarterbacks coach G.A. Mangus used the word "thousands."

At receiver, Jason Barnes and Joe Hills both have the size to be difference-makers. But they've yet to make consistent impacts. Losing tight end Jared Cook to the NFL hurts, but Weslye Saunders can ably take over.

New line coach Eric Wolford is preaching a new toughness and physicality to a line that returns three starters, including big left tackle Jarriel King and several other players that saw significant time a year ago.

The Gamecocks must cut down on the 39 sacks they allowed last season.

DEFENSE

There's more talent on this side of the ball, but there's significantly less depth.

"I just hope that doesn't mean our intensity drops," said coordinator Ellis Johnson.

Eric Norwood, who nearly entered the NFL draft after last season, will be in charge of making sure the energy stays high. Norwood will be listed as the starter at weakside linebacker, but he'll also play quite a bit at end, the position he solely played in his first two years. He can also play at tackle.

Norwood has 22 career sacks, just four shy of the school record.

The Gamecocks lost their top three corners, but they've got a lot of faith in early-enrolling freshman Stephon Gilmore and sophomore Akeem Auguste.

Chris Culliver and Darian Stewart are solid. Freshman DeVonte Holloman will factor in there, as well.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Spencer Lanning, who averaged 42.1 yards a punt last season, is entrenched at that position. But the kicking duties are fairly open after the graduation of Ryan Succop, which is an immense loss for the Gamecocks.

Lanning and walk-on Adam Yates are competing at placekicker, although neither looked especially good in the spring game.

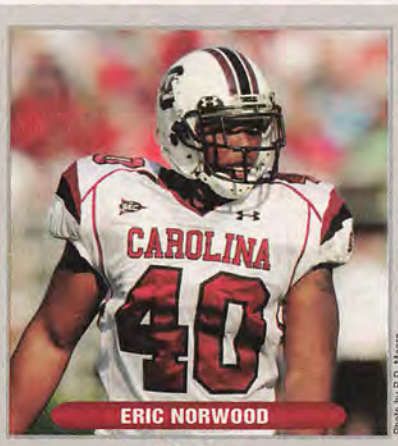
Shane Beamer, son of Virginia Tech coach and noted special teams ace Frank Beamer, takes over in charge of the special teams.

OVERVIEW

Five years in, and South Carolina is still waiting for Steve Spurrier to turn the Gamecocks into big winners. They're 28-22 in his four seasons, with one bowl win and one eight-win season.

Spurrier brought in five new assistants after another deflating finish to the season that included three consecutive blowout losses. Perhaps fresh blood is what the team needs, but with Alabama rotating on, the schedule could again prevent Spurrier and South Carolina from truly competing in the East.

The Gamecocks could certainly use an eight-win season to boost morale. Easier said than done, however.



ERIC NORWOOD

Photo by R.D. Moore

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Stephen Garcia	6-2	219	So.
	Reid McCollum	6-3	218	Fr.
RB	Brian Maddox	5-11	224	Jr.
	Jarvis Giles	5-11	183	Fr.
FB	**Pat DiMarco***	**6-0**	**243**	**Jr.**
	Dalton Wilson	6-0	223	Fr.
WR	Moe Brown	6-0	183	Sr.
	Dion LeCorn	5-11	220	Jr.
WR	**Jason Barnes***	**6-4**	**199**	**So.**
	Joe Hills	6-4	199	Jr.
TE	Weslye Saunders	6-5	280	Jr.
	Byron McKnight	6-4	229	So.
LT	**Jarriel King***	**6-5**	**312**	**Jr.**
	Quintin Richardson	6-3	283	So.
LG	Lemuel Jeanpierre	6-4	294	Sr.
	Kevin Young	6-5	310	Jr.
C	**Garrett Anderson***	**6-4**	**307**	**Sr.**
	Seaver Brown	6-5	303	Jr.
RG	**Terrence Campbell***	**6-3**	**290**	**Jr.**
	T.J. Johnson	6-4	297	Fr.
RT	Hutch Eckerson	6-6	290	Jr.
	Kyle Nunn	6-6	293	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Clifton Geathers	6-8	281	Jr.
	Devin Taylor	6-7	232	Fr.
DT	**Ladi Ajiboye***	**6-1**	**285**	**Jr.**
	Kenny Davis	6-3	287	Fr.
DT	**Nate Pepper***	**6-1**	**300**	**Sr.**
	Travian Robertson	6-4	283	Jr.
DE	**Cliff Matthews***	**6-4**	**289**	**Jr.**
	Chaz Sutton	6-3	243	Fr.
LB	**Eric Norwood***	**6-1**	**252**	**Sr.**
	Shaq Wilson	5-11	200	So.
LB	Rodney Paulk	6-0	216	Jr.
	Josh Dickerson	6-1	221	Jr.
LB	**Darian Stewart***	**5-11**	**216**	**Sr.**
	DeVonte Holloman	6-2	221	Fr.
CB	Stephon Gilmore	6-1	188	Fr.
	Addison Williams	5-8	177	Jr.
CB	Akeem Auguste	5-10	180	So.
	C.C. Whitlock	5-10	173	So.
SS	DeVonte Holloman	6-2	211	Fr.
	Antonio Allen	6-1	202	So.
FS	**Chris Culliver***	**6-0**	**190**	**Jr.**
	Jarrett Burns	6-1	181	Fr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
PK	Spencer Lanning	5-11	188	Jr.
P	**Spencer Lanning***	**5-11**	**188**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 3	at North Carolina State
Sept. 12	at Georgia
Sept. 19	FLORIDA ATLANTIC
Sept. 24	OLE MISS
Oct. 3	SOUTH CAROLINA STATE
Oct. 10	KENTUCKY
Oct. 17	at Alabama
Oct. 24	VANDERBILT
Oct. 31	at Tennessee
Nov. 7	at Arkansas
Nov. 14	FLORIDA
Nov. 28	CLEMSON

2008 Results

(7-6, 4-4)

W	NC STATE	34-0
L	at Vanderbilt	17-24
L	GEORGIA	7-14
W	WOFFORD	23-13
W	UAB	26-13
W	at Ole Miss	31-24
W	at Kentucky	24-17
L	LSU	17-24
W	TENNESSEE	27-6
W	ARKANSAS	34-21
L	at Florida	6-56
L	at Clemson	14-31
	Outback Bowl	
L	vs. Iowa	10-31

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	20.8	96
Rushing	94.1	112
Passing	222.5	50
Total	316.5	97
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	21.1	31
Rushing	132.7	43
Passing	159.2	2
Total	291.9	13
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 11	- 0.85	107

ARKANSAS RAZORBACKS

NATIONAL RANK 42

SEC rank: 8 | Record: 5-7 | SEC record: 2-6 (T-4th, West) | Stadium: Reynolds Razorback Stadium (72,000)

Razorbacks in A Box

COACH: Bobby Petrino — At Arkansas: 5-7, 1 year; overall: 46-16, 5 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Paul Petrino
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Willy Robinson
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1989, Southwest
LAST BOWL: 2007 season, Cotton
RETURNING STARTERS: 17; 7 offense, 9 defense, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: TE D.J. Williams, RB Michael Smith, QB Ryan Mallett, WR Jarius Wright, DT Malcolm Sheppard, DE Adrian Davis, LB Jerry Franklin
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The offense in the spring flashed the big-play potential of Petrino's Louisville past. Much will depend on the development of Mallett and/or Tyler Wilson at quarterback, but with depth at running back and receiver, the offense figures to take a big step up from the 21.9 points it averaged in Petrino's debut season.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Defense and special teams must improve from a dreadful 2008, when the Razorbacks allowed 31.2 points per game. Expect incoming freshmen and junior college transfers to get early auditions in the secondary. Top running backs Michael Smith (hamstring) and Dennis Johnson (foot) need to report healthy.

OFFENSE

New quarterbacks Ryan Mallett and Tyler Wilson have fans dreaming of big passes to tight end D.J. Williams and wide receivers Jarius Wright, Joe Adams and London Crawford.

Mallett, a sophomore transfer from Michigan, impressed coaches with his big arm and ability to throw deep.

But Wilson posted some better spring scrimmages than Mallett, including in the spring game. Wilson, a freshman, was granted a medical redshirt in 2008 after mononucleosis limited his season to just two mop-up roles behind graduated starter Casey Dick.

Coaches consciously avoid talk of a quarterback controversy.

"We like to call it depth," quarterbacks coach Garrick McGee said.

There could be depth at tailback, too, although 1,000-yard rusher Michael Smith (hamstring) must return healthy. Injuries cost Dennis Johnson (foot), Brandon Barnett (broken tibia) and freshman Knile Davis (ankle) all or most of spring. Arkansas also is eagerly awaiting the arrival of touted freshman Ronnie Wingo.

Wright and Adams, both sophomores, were explosive all spring. Crawford, who caught last season's game-winner against LSU, and Reggie Fish had some moments, too.

Williams is the most reliable receiver of them all, but he focused this spring on improving his blocking and becoming an all-around tight end. "This year it's more being tough and battling it out in the trenches," he said.

Wade Grayson moved from guard to center to replace All-American Jonathan Luigs. DeMarcus Love moved from guard to tackle. Mitch Petrus, ineligible in 2008, moved back to starting guard like in 2007.

DEFENSE

Ends Adrian Davis and Jake Bequette and top alternate Damario Ambrose and senior tackle Malcolm Sheppard are the strength of a defense that has nowhere to go but up.

Sheppard was especially effective when the coaches stopped trying to fit him into the scheme, instead fitting the defense to him.

"We kind of turned him loose," coach Bobby Petrino said after a late-spring scrimmage. "Quit trying to ask him to read things and turned him loose. He caused a lot of havoc."

Starting linebackers Jerry Franklin, Wendel Davis and Freddy Burton return, with sophomore Bret Harris challenging Burton. Newcomers must provide depth at linebacker.

Some newcomers — including freshman cornerbacks Darius Winston and David Gordon, and junior college safeties Anthony Leon and Rudell Crim — could start in the secondary. But several incumbents, such as cornerbacks Isaac Madison and Ramon Broadway, posted strong springs.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Special teams lapses created such problems that Petrino took special measures to correct them. He hired his old coaching mentor from Utah State and Louisville — John L. Smith.

Smith will be working with better numbers than last season, when the Hogs used so many true freshmen on special teams.

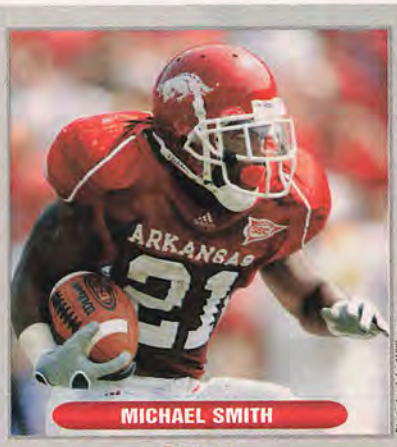
The team's expected punter, junior college transfer Briton Forester, won't arrive until August.

Much of Arkansas' special teams fate rests on strong-legged placekicker Alex Tejada rebounding from a disastrous sophomore swoon.

OVERVIEW

There are plenty of personnel questions, but the team seemed to adjust and settle in to Petrino's coaching style this spring. The Hogs showed their potential with an upset of LSU last season and have the returning experience to make more noise this time.

Swapping Texas for Texas A&M in the nonconference schedule improves at least one game from near-certain defeat to a tossup, and could help Arkansas get back into the bowl business.



MICHAEL SMITH

Photo by John Williamson

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Ryan Mallett	6-7	248	So.
	Tyler Wilson	6-2	202	Fr.
RB	**Michael Smith***	**5-7**	**176**	**Sr.**
	Dennis Johnson	5-7	200	So.
WR	**Joe Adams***	**5-11**	**177**	**So.**
	Carlton Salters	5-11	195	Jr.
WR	**London Crawford***	**6-2**	**204**	**Sr.**
	Greg Childs	6-3	204	So.
WR	Jarius Wright	5-10	174	So.
	Reggie Fish	5-6	159	Sr.
TE	**D.J. Williams***	**6-2**	**251**	**Jr.**
	Ben Cleveland	6-4	249	Jr.
LT	**Ray Dominguez***	**6-4**	**239**	**Jr.**
	Grant Freeman	6-7	289	So.
LG	Mitch Petrus	6-4	315	Sr.
	Michael Aguirre	6-5	319	Sr.
C	**Wade Grayson***	**6-4**	**289**	**Jr.**
	Clay Bemberg	6-2	287	Jr.
RG	Seth Oxner	6-4	305	So.
	Grant Cook	6-4	322	So.
RT	**DeMarcus Love***	**6-5**	**305**	**Jr.**
	Matt Hall	6-9	328	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Jake Bequette***	**6-5**	**271**	**So.**
	Damario Ambrose	6-5	268	Jr.
DT	**Zach Stadther***	**6-1**	**289**	**So.**
	Alfred Davis	6-1	322	Fr.
DT	**Malcolm Sheppard***	**6-2**	**280**	**Sr.**
	Patrick Jones	6-1	309	Jr.
DE	**Adrian Davis***	**6-4**	**250**	**Sr.**
	Tenarius Wright	6-1	233	Fr.
LB	**Freddy Burton***	**6-2**	**227**	**Jr.**
	Bret Harris	5-11	210	So.
LB	**Wendel Davis***	**6-1**	**222**	**Sr.**
	Jermaine Love	5-10	230	Jr.
LB	**Jerry Franklin***	**6-1**	**237**	**So.**
	Jelani Smith	6-0	205	Fr.
CB	**Isaac Madison***	**5-10**	**181**	**Jr.**
	Jerell Norton	6-0	200	Jr.
CB	Ramon Broadway	5-9	191	Jr.
	Andru Stewart	5-10	188	Jr.
SS	Jerico Nelson	5-9	197	So.
	Chris Raggett	5-11	202	Fr.
FS	Matt Harris	6-2	190	Sr.
	Elton Ford*	**6-0**	**208**	**So.**

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
PK	**Alex Tejada***	**6-0**	**205**	**Jr.**
P	Briton Forester	5-10	185	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	vs. Missouri State (Little Rock)
Sept. 19	GEORGIA
Sept. 26	at Alabama
Oct. 3	vs. Texas A&M (Arlington)
Oct. 10	AUBURN
Oct. 17	at Florida
Oct. 24	at Ole Miss
Oct. 31	EASTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 7	SOUTH CAROLINA
Nov. 14	TROY
Nov. 21	vs. Mississippi State (Little Rock)
Nov. 28	at LSU

2008 Results

(5-7, 2-6)

W	WESTERN ILLINOIS	28-24
W	LOUISIANA-MONROE	28-27
L	ALABAMA	14-49
L	at Texas	10-52
L	FLORIDA	7-38
W	at Auburn	25-22
L	at Kentucky	20-21
L	OLE MISS	21-23
W	TULSA	30-23
L	at South Carolina	21-34
L	at Mississippi State	28-31
W	LSU	31-30

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	21.9	91
Rushing	113.5	97
Passing	259.6	23
Total	373.1	49
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	31.2	93
Rushing	170.8	90
Passing	204.4	54
Total	375.2	72
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 9	- 0.75	102

AUBURN TIGERS

NATIONAL RANK 44

SEC rank: 9 | Record: 5-7 | SEC record: 2-6 (T-4th, West) | Stadium: Jordan-Hare (87,451)

Tigers in A Box

COACH: Gene Chizik — At Auburn: 1st year; overall: 5-19, 2 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Gus Malzahn
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ted Roof
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2004
LAST BOWL: 2007, Chick-fil-A
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 7 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: DE Antonio Coleman, C Ryan Pugh, LT Lee Ziemba, RB Mario Fannin, RB Ben Tate, QB Kodi Burns, LB Eltoro Freeman, LB Josh Bynes, QB Neil Caudle
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: New coaching staff, new excitement. Coleman is among the best anywhere. Defense has talent. Tate is a powerful runner. Fannin is a threat to score anytime. Offensive line should be much improved.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Depth – everywhere. A killer schedule, especially after September. Starting quarterback still undecided. Several players recovering from injury. Kicking game was almost laughable a year ago. Will there be a hangover from 2008?

OFFENSE

Auburn fans had mixed reaction to the return of new coach Gene Chizik. They remembered how good his defenses were when he was on Tommy Tuberville's staff before going to Texas. But they knew how bad his record was while leading Iowa State.

Tiger fans were won over by the end of spring, largely due to the promise of an improved offense and a recruiting harvest.

Heralded guru Gus Malzahn, whose Tulsa teams led the nation in total offense the past two seasons, is the new coordinator. Effectiveness of his fast-paced game begins at quarterback. The starting job is still undecided.

Either Kodi Burns, the 2008 starter, or fellow junior Neil Caudle, injured often during his career, will be under center.

Backfield headliners are powerful senior Ben Tate and versatile Mario Fannin, a threat to score any time he gets the ball. Newcomer Onterio McCalebb, the nation's top prep school runner, could be special.

Receivers have underachieved in recent years and that must change. Tim Hawthorne, Terrell Zachery and Montez Billings bring experience. Several first-year guys bring speed. Senior tight end Tommy Trott must rebound from knee surgery. Newcomer DeAngelo Benton brings exceptional ability.

A bigger, stronger line will be critical. Ryan Pugh is the SEC's best center and junior tackle Lee Ziemba could be all-conference, but there's not much depth.

DEFENSE

One thing seems always certain about an Auburn defense. It will be one of the best anywhere, regardless of all else. Could that change in 2009?

Nine lettermen departed, including two defensive line starters, five linebackers and the team's best cornerback. Key spring injuries made it worse.

So, will things be bad on the Plains? Probably not.

Start with the line. Senior end Antonio Coleman, a *Lindy's* second-team All-American, is one of the nation's best pass rushers. Juniors Michael Goggans and Antoine Carter at the other end make this a strong point.

Senior Jake Ricks, and juniors Mike Blanc and Zach Clayton, will man defensive tackle.

Linebacker is thin, but potentially dominating. Athletic Josh Bynes has all-star talent. Craig Stevens, a 2008 starter, will again be on the strong side, supported by Marcus Jemison and Da'Shaun Barnes.

Auburn is secure with Eltoro Freeman named the weakside starter. Spencer Pybus, a 2008 Freshman All-SEC honoree, also returns.

The secondary will be a strength — if everybody stays healthy.

Walter McFadden will be one cornerback. Neiko Thorpe should start at the other corner. Aairon Savage, who missed last year after being a 2007 starter, will push him for playing time.

Safety is solid if Mike McNeil returns from a broken bone, and back-up Mike Slade shakes off a spring injury.

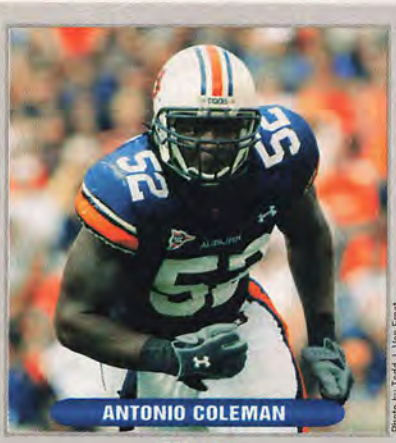
SPECIAL TEAMS

Missed field goals and extra points could have turned around the 2008 season. Placekicker Wes Byrum needs to return to 2007 form. Punter Clinton Durst was third in the SEC in average last year.

The return game should be exciting with Mario Fannin deep, and other speedsters are legitimate threats.

OVERVIEW

After initial skepticism, fans are enthused again. It could be a surprising year, but several things need to happen — a quick start, offensive line consistency, better quarterback play, good health, emerging playmakers and an improving kicking game. Is that too much to hope for?



ANTONIO COLEMAN

Photo by Todd J. Van Ernst

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Kodi Burns***	**6-2**	**209**	**Jr.**
	Neil Caudle	6-3	199	Jr.
RB	**Ben Tate***	**5-11**	**217**	**Sr.**
	Mario Fannin	5-11	226	Jr.
WR	Terrell Zachery	6-1	209	Jr.
	Montez Billings*	**6-2**	**184**	**Sr.**
WR	Tim Hawthorne	6-3	214	Jr.
	Quindarius Carr	6-1	181	So.
WR	Darvin Adams	6-3	184	So.
	Derek Winter	6-0	200	So.
HB	Mario Fannin	5-11	226	Jr.
	Tommy Trott*	**6-5**	**237**	**Sr.**
LT	**Lee Ziemba***	**6-8**	**304**	**Jr.**
	A.J. Greene	6-5	279	So.
LG	Mike Berry	6-3	313	Jr.
	Bart Eddins	6-4	290	Jr.
C	**Ryan Pugh***	**6-4**	**280**	**Jr.**
	Mike Berry	6-3	313	Jr.
RG	**Byron Isom***	**6-3**	**293**	**Jr.**
	Jared Cooper	6-4	300	So.
RT	Andrew McCain	6-6	295	Sr.
	Vance Smith	6-2	255	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Antonio Coleman***	**6-3**	**257**	**Sr.**
	Cameron Henderson	6-5	230	Fr.
DT	Mike Blanc	6-4	288	Jr.
	Zach Clayton	6-3	285	Jr.
DT	Jake Ricks	6-4	296	Sr.
	Derrick Lykes	6-2	287	Fr.
DE	**Michael Goggans***	**6-3**	**257**	**Jr.**
	Antoine Carter	6-4	255	Jr.
LB	**Craig Stevens***	**6-3**	**227**	**Jr.**
	Da'Shaun Barnes	6-2	222	Fr.
LB	Eltoro Freeman	5-11	222	So.
	Spencer Pybus	6-0	216	So.
LB	**Josh Bynes***	**6-2**	**233**	**Jr.**
	Adam Herring	6-1	211	So.
CB	**Walter McFadden***	**6-0**	**176**	**Sr.**
	T'Sharvan Bell	6-0	177	Fr.
CB	Neiko Thorpe	6-2	182	So.
	Aairon Savage	5-11	173	Sr.
SS	**Mike McNeil***	**6-2**	**205**	**Jr.**
	Christian Thompson	6-1	200	So.
FS	**Zac Etheridge***	**6-0**	**204**	**Jr.**
	Mike Slade	6-3	191	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Wes Byrum***	**6-2**	**214**	**Jr.**
P	**Clinton Durst***	**6-1**	**192**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	LOUISIANA TECH
Sept. 12	MISSISSIPPI STATE
Sept. 19	WEST VIRGINIA
Sept. 26	BALL STATE
Oct. 3	at Tennessee
Oct. 10	at Arkansas
Oct. 17	KENTUCKY
Oct. 24	at LSU
Oct. 31	OLE MISS
Nov. 7	FURMAN
Nov. 14	at Georgia
Nov. 27	ALABAMA

2008 Results

(5-7, 2-6)

W	LOUISIANA-MONROE	34-0
W	SOUTHERN MISS	27-13
W	at Mississippi State	3-2
L	LSU	21-26
W	TENNESSEE	14-12
L	at Vanderbilt	13-14
L	ARKANSAS	22-25
L	at West Virginia	17-34
L	at Ole Miss	7-17
W	TENNESSEE-MARTIN	37-20
L	GEORGIA	13-17
L	at Alabama	0-36

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	17.3	110
Rushing	137.5	69
Passing	165.4	99
Total	302.9	104
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	18.0	14
Rushing	138.9	54
Passing	178.8	19
Total	317.8	29
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 8	- 0.67	100

KENTUCKY WILDCATS

NATIONAL RANK 50

SEC rank: 10 | Record: 7-6 | SEC record: 2-6 (6th, East) | Stadium: Commonwealth (67,606)

Wildcats in A Box

COACH: Rich Brooks — At Kentucky: 32-41, 6 years; 123-150-4 overall, 24 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Joker Phillips, Randy Sanders
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Steve Brown
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1976, co-champs
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2005
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 7 offense, 5 defense, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: CB Trevard Lindley, LB Micah Johnson, DE Jeremy Jarmon, WR/QB Randall Cobb, DT Corey Peters
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Wildcats should be solid again defensively. Lindley, Johnson and Jarmon are legit All-SEC talents, and several young players appear ready to step in and fill the gaps. This is Kentucky's deepest and most talented defensive line since Brooks arrived in 2003.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Mike Hartline needs to be better in his second full year as the starting quarterback, and a receiving unit that was painfully young last fall also needs to make major strides. Depth at running back is another major concern at the skill positions.

OFFENSE

The hope for a better offense starts with quarterback Mike Hartline, who finished last season with a good outing in the Liberty Bowl win over East Carolina.

Hartline had good and bad days this spring, but he didn't have to worry about holding on to his job. He has that wrapped up, although Morgan Newton and Ryan Mossakowski, a pair of highly touted recruits, will be closely evaluated in the fall to see if they can help.

The coaches haven't asked Hartline to do too much — and he doesn't have the strongest arm — but Kentucky hopes to take more shots down field this season.

Many of those passes should be in the direction of versatile sophomore Randall Cobb, who likely will be Kentucky's biggest threat.

Cobb took over for Hartline for four games late last year and flashed exciting potential as a dual-threat quarterback, but he spent spring working mostly at receiver, where he caught 21 passes in 2008. He'll see time at quarterback in UK's "Wildcat" package.

Senior Alfonso Smith is the likely starter at tailback. Smith, who is a home-run threat with his 4.3-speed, has gradually improved as a receiver and inside runner. Derrick Locke, returning from a knee injury, could give UK a nice 1-2 punch at tailback.

DEFENSE

Kentucky was particularly stout up front last season and will miss the contributions of tackle Myron Pryor, who was a disruptive force in the middle.

But plenty of talent returns, led by end Jeremy Jarmon. His numbers went down slightly from his sophomore year, but he was still a force, creating double teams that freed his teammates to make plays. He had 4.5 sacks last season, half his 2007 total.

Senior tackle Corey Peters was often overlooked while playing alongside Pryor and Jarmon. He still had 10 tackles for loss and four sacks, and he is a darkhorse candidate for All-SEC honors.

Senior Micah Johnson, an All-SEC pick by league coaches, will head-up the middle linebacker position. Senior Sam Maxwell, a dependable backup for three seasons, should be solid on the strong side.

Trevard Lindley, arguably the nation's best corner, will lead the charge in the secondary. Lindley isn't that big (6-0, 175) and while he has very good speed, he's not what you'd call a blazer. But his anticipation, closing speed and ball skills are off the charts.

Sophomore Randall Burden followed a strong Liberty Bowl with a good spring and could start at the corner opposite Lindley. Paul Warford, a junior with 14 career starts, is also back in the mix after redshirting last season.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Sophomore Ryan Tydlacka, who served as the team's "pooch" punter last year, will move into the full-time role after the graduation of Tim Masthay.

Placekicking continues to be an issue. Senior Lones Seiber had a rough '08, making just 11 of 19 field-goal attempts. Tydlacka also will challenge Seiber for the kickoff job.

OVERVIEW

Kentucky should once again have a defense that can compete with most in the SEC, but the Wildcats must find a way to make more plays offensively. If the offense can produce enough to keep the defense from wearing down late, UK will be in good shape for its fourth consecutive bowl bid.

MICAH JOHNSON

Photo by: Jim Rinaldi/Icon SMI

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Mike Hartline***	**6-6**	**204**	**Jr.**
	Randall Cobb	5-11	188	So.
RB	Alfonso Smith	6-1	204	Sr.
	Moncell Allen	5-7	225	Jr.
RB	**John Conner***	**5-11**	**240**	**Sr.**
	A.J. Nance	5-11	250	Sr.
WR	Randall Cobb	5-11	188	So.
	E.J. Adams*	**6-0**	**197**	**Sr.**
WR	Kyrus Lanxter	6-2	195	Jr.
	Gene McCaskill	6-0	175	So.
TE	**T.C. Drake***	**6-6**	**242**	**Sr.**
	Ross Bogue	6-5	241	Sr.
LT	**Zipp Duncan***	**6-5**	**285**	**Sr.**
	Brad Durham	6-4	310	Jr.
LG	Christian Johnson	6-4	325	Sr.
	Dave Ulinski	6-5	305	Fr.
C	**Jorge Gonzalez***	**6-3**	**305**	**Sr.**
	Matt Smith	6-4	280	Fr.
RG	Stuart Hines	6-4	295	So.
	Jake Lanefski	6-4	286	So.
RT	**Justin Jeffries***	**6-6**	**310**	**Sr.**
	Billy Joe Murphy	6-6	295	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Jeremy Jarmon***	**6-3**	**279**	**Sr.**
	Chandler Burden	6-4	294	So.
DT	**Corey Peters***	**6-3**	**295**	**Sr.**
	Mark Crawford	6-1	295	So.
DT	Ricky Lumpkin	6-4	294	Jr.
	Shane McCord	6-2	282	Jr.
DE	Collins Ukwu	6-5	247	Fr.
	DeQuin Evans	6-3	260	Jr.
LB	Danny Trevathan	6-1	220	So.
	William Johnson	6-2	200	Fr.
LB	**Micah Johnson***	**6-2**	**256**	**Sr.**
	Mikhail Mabry	6-2	248	Sr.
LB	Sam Maxwell	6-3	244	Sr.
	Jacob Dufrene	6-1	220	So.
CB	**Trevard Lindley***	**6-0**	**175**	**Sr.**
	Cartier Rice	5-10	179	Fr.
CB	Randall Burden	6-0	170	So.
	Paul Warford	5-10	200	Jr.
SS	Winston Guy	6-1	208	So.
	Matt Lentz	6-3	209	So.
FS	Calvin Harrison	6-1	205	Sr.
	Ashton Cobb*	**6-0**	**215**	**Sr.**

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Lones Seiber***	**5-9**	**195**	**Sr.**
P	Ryan Tydlacka	6-1	202	So.

*** Returning Starters in Bold**

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	vs. Miami (OH) (Cincinnati)
Sept. 19	LOUISVILLE
Sept. 26	FLORIDA
Oct. 3	ALABAMA
Oct. 10	at South Carolina
Oct. 17	at Auburn
Oct. 24	LOUISIANA-MONROE
Oct. 31	MISSISSIPPI STATE
Nov. 7	EASTERN KENTUCKY
Nov. 14	at Vanderbilt
Nov. 21	at Georgia
Nov. 28	TENNESSEE

2008 Results

	(7-6, 2-6)	
W	at Louisville	27-2
W	NORFOLK STATE	38-3
W	MIDDLE TENNESSEE	20-14
W	WESTERN KENTUCKY	41-3
L	at Alabama	14-17
L	SOUTH CAROLINA	17-24
W	ARKANSAS	21-20
L	at Florida	5-63
W	at Mississippi State	14-13
L	GEORGIA	38-42
L	VANDERBILT	24-31
L	at Tennessee	10-28
	Liberty Bowl	
W	vs. East Carolina	25-19

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	22.6	87
Rushing	127.5	81
Passing	171.9	96
Total	299.3	106
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	21.5	35
Rushing	139.2	55
Passing	193.2	40
Total	332.4	40
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 5	- 0.38	35

VANDERBILT COMMODORES

NATIONAL RANK 64

SEC rank: 11 | Record: 7-6 | SEC record: 4-4 (T-3rd, East) | Stadium: Vanderbilt Stadium (39,790)

Commodores in A Box

COACH: Bobby Johnson — At Vanderbilt: 27-56, 7 years; overall: 87-92 overall, 15 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ted Cain
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jamie Bryant
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1923 (Southern Conference)
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 18: 8 offense, 9 defense, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Jared Hawkins, TE Brandon Barden, DE Broderick Stewart, DT Greg Billinger, LB Chris Marve, CB Myron Lewis, S Ryan Hamilton
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Experience on both sides of the ball. Vanderbilt returns a number of talented and tested players, particularly on the offensive and defensive lines. All five offensive linemen who started the Music City Bowl victory are back.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Settling on a quarterback, and elevating the passing game. QB Larry Smith made his first career start against Boston College and led the Commodores to a historic win, but he will be pushed by fifth-year senior Mackenzi Adams. Spring practice was rough health-wise on receivers, putting pressure on unproven players.

OFFENSE

Vanderbilt's line play primarily will dictate production. All five projected starters played extensively last season, starting together in the final four games — including a win at Kentucky that clinched bowl eligibility.

Reilly Lauer has settled in at left tackle after spending most of his time at defensive end, allowing Kyle Fischer to move inside to left guard. On the right side, Thomas Welch has continued to progress at tackle and Eric Hensley has also transitioned from tackle to guard. Senior co-captain Bradley Vierling holds down the center spot.

The experienced line will help take some of the pressure off young quarterback Larry Smith, who made his collegiate debut in the regular-season finale against Wake Forest and started the Music City Bowl. Fifth-year senior Mackenzi Adams gives Vanderbilt a reliable backup.

Jared Hawkins, who led the team with a career-high 593 rushing yards as a junior, should be healthy after a foot injury sidelined him for the final two games and spring practice. Behind him, Kennard Reeves, Gaston Miller and Jermaine Doster will battle for carries.

Brandon Barden caught 28 passes in '08, and Austin Monahan is a second option.

Transfer receivers Tray Herndon (Minnesota) and Terence Jeffers (Connecticut) will have an opportunity to impact the passing game. Senior Alex Washington can be a deep-ball threat, as can Udom Umoh and John Cole.

DEFENSE

A defense that allowed just under 20 points per game returns largely intact, although the two exceptions — cornerback D.J. Moore and safety Reshard Langford — are both gone to the NFL.

Myron Lewis, who has 25 consecutive starts, will handle one of the cornerback positions. He terrorized opposing quarterbacks with five interceptions and five sacks last season.

Sophomores Casey Hayward and Jamie Graham have been encouraging at the other cornerback spot. Sean Richardson moves into the free safety spot.

Elsewhere, the Commodores have a nice mix of solid and standout performers. Defensive end Broderick Stewart, who broke his leg in a November loss to Tennessee, is a dynamic pass rusher. At linebacker, sophomore Chris Marve and senior Patrick Benoist finished 2008 with 100-plus tackles, as did senior strong safety Ryan Hamilton.

Defensive tackles Greg Billinger and Adam Smotherman stepped forward as run-stoppers who can also pressure the quarterback. Defensive end Steven Stone is strong against the run and can get to the QB as well. John Stokes and Brent Trice are interchangeable at strongside linebacker.

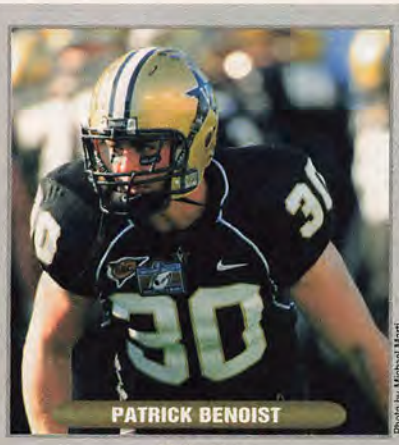
SPECIAL TEAMS

Brett Upson, who had a breakout season as a junior, handles the punting chores. Redshirt freshman Ryan Fowler likely will take over field goal and extra-point duties, as well as kickoffs.

Potential punt and/or kickoff returners include receivers Alex Washington and John Cole, running back Gaston Miller and cornerback Jamie Graham.

OVERVIEW

Vanderbilt's defense will have to keep the team in games while the offense finds its footing, particularly if Smith is the starter at quarterback. Far from wide open under optimal circumstances, the Commodores might not generate a lot of points. Vanderbilt has to win the games it's expected to win in order to make a second straight bowl appearance.



PATRICK BENOIST

Photo by Michael Marti

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Larry Smith	6-2	216	So.
	Mackenzi Adams*	**6-3**	**212**	**Sr.**
RB	**Jared Hawkins***	**5-10**	**195**	**Sr.**
	Kennard Reeves	6-0	222	Jr.
WR	Alex Washington	5-10	182	Sr.
	John Cole	5-11	170	Fr.
WR	Udom Umoh	6-0	172	So.
	Terence Jeffers	6-2	225	Jr.
WR	Tray Herndon	5-10	182	So.
	Akeem Dunham	6-3	198	Fr.
TE	**Brandon Barden***	**6-5**	**245**	**So.**
	Austin Monahan	6-6	250	Jr.
LT	**Reilly Lauer***	**6-6**	**275**	**Jr.**
	Ryan Seymour	6-4	275	Fr.
LG	**Kyle Fischer***	**66-**	**308**	**So.**
	Ryan Custer	6-3	295	Sr.
C	**Bradley Vierling***	**6-3**	**294**	**Sr.**
	Chris Aaron	6-3	290	Jr.
RG	**Eric Hensley***	**6-6**	**315**	**Sr.**
	Joey Bailey	6-4	290	Jr.
RT	**Thomas Welch***	**6-7**	**310**	**Sr.**
	James Williams	6-6	310	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Broderick Stewart***	**6-5**	**228**	**Sr.**
	Teriall Brannon	6-3	242	Jr.
DT	**Greg Billinger***	**6-4**	**287**	**Sr.**
	Rob Lohr	6-4	275	Fr.
DT	**Adam Smotherman***	**6-4**	**290**	**Jr.**
	T.J. Greenstone	6-3	278	So.
DE	**Steven Stone***	**6-5**	**272**	**Sr.**
	Tim Fugger	6-4	250	So.
LB	**John Stokes***	**6-5**	**228**	**Jr.**
	Brent Trice	6-3	210	Sr.
LB	**Chris Marve***	**6-0**	**228**	**So.**
	Tristan Strong	6-1	225	Fr.
LB	**Patrick Benoist***	**6-0**	**220**	**Sr.**
	Nate Campbell	6-3	228	Jr.
CB	**Myron Lewis***	**6-3**	**205**	**Sr.**
	Jamie Graham	6-0	192	So.
CB	Casey Hayward	6-0	180	So.
	Alan Strong	5-10	175	Jr.
SS	**Ryan Hamilton***	**6-2**	**208**	**Sr.**
	Micah Powell	6-0	205	Fr.
FS	Sean Richardson	6-2	198	So.
	Joel Caldwell	6-1	192	Sr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Ryan Fowler	5-10	165	Fr.
P	**Brett Upson***	**5-11**	**188**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	WESTERN CAROLINA
Sept. 12	at LSU
Sept. 19	MISSISSIPPI STATE
Sept. 26	at Rice
Oct. 3	OLE MISS
Oct. 10	at Army
Oct. 17	GEORGIA
Oct. 24	at South Carolina
Oct. 31	GEORGIA TECH
Nov. 7	at Florida
Nov. 14	KENTUCKY
Nov. 21	at Tennessee

2008 Results

(7-6, 4-4)

W	at Miami (Ohio)	34-13
W	SOUTH CAROLINA	24-17
W	RICE	38-21
W	at Ole Miss	23-17
W	AUBURN	14-13
L	at Mississippi State	14-17
L	at Georgia	14-24
L	DUKE	7-10
L	FLORIDA	14-42
W	at Kentucky	31-24
L	TENNESSEE	10-20
L	at Wake Forest	10-23
	Music City Bowl	
W	vs. Boston College	16-14

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	19.1	105
Rushing	133.6	73
Passing	122.6	112
Total	256.2	117
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	19.6	21
Rushing	144.7	69
Passing	174.9	15
Total	319.6	30
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 9	+ 0.69	19

MISSISSIPPI STATE BULLDOGS

NATIONAL RANK 78

SEC rank: 12 | Record: 4-8 | SEC record: 2-6 (T-4th, West) | Stadium: Davis Wade Stadium (55,082)

Bulldogs in A Box

COACH: Dan Mullen — At Mississippi State and overall, 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Les Koenning
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Carl Torbush
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1941
LAST BOWL: 2007, Liberty
RETURNING STARTERS: 11; 6 offense, 5 defense
PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Anthony Dixon, QB Tyson Lee, WR Brandon McRae, DT Pernell McPhee, LB K.J. Wright, LB Jamar Chaney
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: MSU again figures to be strong defensively. Its linebacking corps will be its main strength. State returns a veteran running back who is bruising in his approach and flashy in his style. An offense built around him could be formidable.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Once again, a lack of depth on the offensive line figures to be a major stumbling block. Does State have the right quarterback to run the spread from the get-go? Lack of depth in the secondary could open up big-time problems.

OFFENSE

Coach Dan Mullen has said he wants a dozen or so wide receivers to get regular playing time, which must have created some serious "woe is me" moments during spring camp when numbers were low.

By August, this problem should be on the road to a solution. Brandon McRae, the team's leading receiver last fall, is expected to be fully recovered from injury.

But the key to Mullen developing a core group of receivers who can execute his spread offense lies in his first signing class. Of the seven receivers signed, those most likely to see playing time are Chad Bumphis, Chris Smith and junior college transfer Leon Berry.

That key — capitalizing immediately off the recruiting class — won't be limited just to State's receivers.

Tyler Russell, Mississippi's Mr. Football in 2008, will be given every chance to win either the starting quarterback job or lots of playing time. Tyson Lee is the incumbent starter, but at 5-10, his lack of height has long been considered a drawback.

For all the hand-wringing about those who will throw and catch, rushing isn't as big a concern.

Anthony Dixon, who has a 1,000-yard season under his belt, is primed to be the showcase of this offense. "We're going to be a big running team," said Mullen, formerly the offensive coordinator at Florida.

The line, which was a trouble spot last year, will need to show improvement if Mullen's spread is to show improvement on the ground or in the air.

DEFENSE

Mullen brought in veteran coach Carl Torbush, a former North Carolina head coach, as coordinator. Players say Torbush's scheme is a bit more complex, but they adapted to it in the spring.

Jamar Chaney is a smart, hard-hitting linebacker who was a senior last year, but a broken ankle in the first game of the season ensured his return via medical redshirt. Beside Chaney at the strongside position, there's a budding star in K.J. Wright.

The linebacking corps should lead the defense, but there are glimmers of promise in other locations, too.

Though the defensive front remains a question mark on the ends, the interior is shaping up nicely. Kyle Love, a senior, returns with two seasons of regular playing time under his belt. Pernell McPhee, perhaps the biggest defensive recruit that Mullen convinced to stay in the fold, was extremely impressive in spring practice.

Torbush will hope to find answers at both ends and in the secondary.

SPECIAL TEAMS

State signed a junior college punter and kicker, and the early returns were outstanding. Placekicker Sean Brauchle turned heads with a 57-yard field goal in a spring scrimmage, and seems a lock to handle the job.

State will need to find a new punt and kick returner with the graduation of Derek Pegues, who was reliable if not explosive.

OVERVIEW

Mississippi State's first season under Mullen will be viewed in the prism of his ability to install the spread offense he's bringing from Florida.

If he can be ahead of schedule on that — and if the defense remains strong and special teams don't provide gaffes — there's enough on the roster and enough favorability on the schedule to contend for a bowl. Remember, this 4-8 team in 2008 was oh-so-close on more than one occasion.

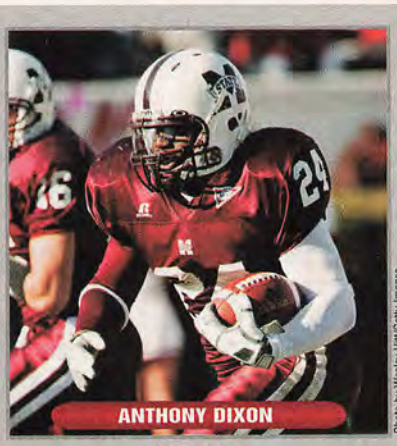

ANTHONY DIXON

Photo by Wesley Hitt/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Tyson Lee***	**5-10**	**200**	**Sr.**
	Chris Relf	6-3	235	So.
RB	**Anthony Dixon***	**6-1**	**235**	**Sr.**
	Christian Ducre	6-0	220	Sr.
FB	Sylvester Hemphill	5-9	230	Fr.
	Patrick Hanrahan	5-11	225	Jr.
WR	**Brandon McRae***	**6-4**	**205**	**Sr.**
	Delmon Robinson	5-9	180	So.
WR	Leon Berry	6-0	190	Jr.
	O'Neal Wilder	6-5	210	Fr.
TE	Brandon Henderson	6-2	255	Jr.
	Kendrick Cook	6-1	250	So.
LT	**Derek Sherrod***	**6-6**	**310**	**Jr.**
	Chris Spencer	6-3	310	Sr.
LG	Craig Jenkins	6-5	315	Sr.
	Templeton Hardy	6-3	300	Fr.
C	**J.C. Brignone***	**6-1**	**300**	**Jr.**
	D.J. Looney	6-1	300	So.
RG	**Quentin Saulsberry***	**6-2**	**300**	**So.**
	Tobias Smith	6-3	310	Fr.
RT	Addison Lawrence	6-4	295	So.
	Phillip Freeman	6-6	300	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Sean Ferguson***	**6-3**	**245**	**So.**
	Nick Bell	6-3	250	Fr.
DT	**Kyle Love***	**6-1**	**310**	**Sr.**
	Charles Burns	6-1	275	Sr.
DT	Pernell McPhee	6-3	275	Jr.
	LaMarcus Williams	6-0	270	Jr.
DE	Brandon Cooper	6-1	255	Jr.
	Trevor Stigers	6-4	255	Fr.
LB	**K.J. Wright***	**6-4**	**245**	**Jr.**
	Michael Hunt	6-3	240	Fr.
LB	**Jamar Chaney***	**6-1**	**245**	**Sr.**
	Bo Walters	6-0	240	So.
LB	Chris White	6-3	245	Jr.
	Karlin Brown	5-8	200	Jr.
CB	**Marcus Washington***	**5-10**	**190**	**Sr.**
	Corey Broomfield	5-10	165	Fr.
CB	Damein Anderson	5-11	195	So.
	Louis Watson	5-10	180	Fr.
SS	Charles Mitchell	5-11	205	So.
	Wade Bonner	5-9	200	So.
FS	Zach Smith	5-11	200	Jr.
	Emmanuel Gatling	6-0	210	Jr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Sean Brauchle	5-10	180	Jr.
P	Heath Hutchens	6-1	215	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	JACKSON STATE
Sept. 12	at Auburn
Sept. 19	at Vanderbilt
Sept. 26	LSU
Oct. 3	GEORGIA TECH
Oct. 10	HOUSTON
Oct. 17	at Middle Tennessee
Oct. 24	FLORIDA
Oct. 31	at Kentucky
Nov. 14	ALABAMA
Nov. 21	vs. Arkansas (Little Rock)
Nov. 28	OLE MISS

2008 Results

(4-8, 2-6)

L	at Louisiana Tech	14-22
W	SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA	34-10
L	AUBURN	2-3
L	at Georgia Tech	7-38
L	at LSU	24-34
W	VANDERBILT	17-14
L	at Tennessee	3-34
W	MIDDLE TENNESSEE	31-22
L	KENTUCKY	13-14
L	at Alabama	7-32
W	ARKANSAS	31-28
L	at Ole Miss	0-45

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	15.3	115
Rushing	100.6	105
Passing	174.3	94
Total	274.9	113
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.7	60
Rushing	150.9	73
Passing	176.6	17
Total	327.5	35
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 4	- 0.33	81

Pryor Offers Speed and Glamour Buckeyes Need

The mindset in Big Ten country these days is much like that of Rocky Balboa. A conference of limitations, the Big Ten is neither as quick nor as athletically adept as its peers ... and yet it still somehow remains standing long into the fight.

Credit the grit and old-school discipline that lives in places like Columbus, where Ohio State just might have another national championship contender, and in University Park, where Penn State looks to build upon last year's Rose Bowl season.

For the Buckeyes, the 2009 season will hinge on the continued growth of its undisputed star, quarterback Terrelle Pryor. Barely 20, the shifty quarterback will shoulder more pressure than perhaps any other player in college football.

Should Pryor help his team to at least a share of the Big Ten title, it would make it five straight for the Buckeyes, placing Jim Tressel next to Woody Hayes (1972-77) as the only conference coaches to accomplish such a feat.

"The conversation has to start at the top with Ohio State," said Northwestern coach Pat Fitzgerald. "You look at the consistency of their success. It's a credit to their players, and to Jim and the staff they have."

Penn State fans may beg to differ. Throughout much of the 2008 season they had the team to beat in the Big Ten, and the Lions were positioned one spot ahead of the Buckeyes in the final Associated Press Top 25 poll. The Nittany Lions will be led by one of the best game managers, quarterback Daryll Clark, and are once again loaded at linebacker.

It looks like a two-horse race, but there are a slew of mid-level contenders hoping that a slip or two from the Nittany Lions and Buckeyes will create a free-for-all for the conference crown.

Michigan State coach Mark Dantonio is trying to bring excellence back to East Lansing. The Spartans have questions yet to be answered at quarterback and running back, but strong recruiting in the past few years should help fill those holes with ready-to-play talent.

Illinois enjoyed a Rose Bowl season two

Big Ten Conference Picks

	GOOD NEWS	BAD NEWS	OUR CALL
1. Ohio State	Who's worried about lost talent? Buckeyes stock up with the best of 'em.	The backfield will miss Beanie badly, regardless of what Buckeye fans say.	Tell the BCS to save a seat for the Buckeyes — again.
2. Penn State	Sean Lee's return means Lions could have country's premier LBs.	The DL and secondary have gaping holes; terrific trio of receivers are gone, too.	Watch for Joe Paterno in front of a thick pack of Big Ten teams scuffling for second place.
3. Michigan State	Last year's top defender (LB Greg Jones) returns, and underrated WR corps is back.	Tough to replace last year's top two offensive stars.	This program seems to be on the rise again, and this year it could reach even higher.
4. Illinois	Juice Williams and Arrelious Benn are the Big Ten's most dynamic offensive duo.	Opponents will be able to exploit the Illini's back seven.	In the last year of a closing window, Illinois will treat its fan base to another exciting run.
5. Wisconsin	Repeat: 3 yards and a cloud of dust, 3 yards and a cloud of dust, etc., etc.	The front four must be rebuilt, and that quarterback cloud still looms over Madison.	The schedule guarantees enough wins for a bowl — enough to keep fans off Bielema's back?
6. Iowa	It's no surprise that the Hawkeyes own the conference's best offensive line.	Shonn Greene's departure will put too much pressure on Ricky Stanzi and passing game.	Unfortunately, the scheduling gods have set up some "road" blocks for the Hawkeyes this year.
7. Michigan	The defense is dandy at all three position groups; the receivers should be superb.	Bring on the true freshman QB, which is hardly ever a good way to be.	Middle of the pack will not satisfy anybody, but for now, it's all they get.
8. Northwestern	Better coach in the Big Ten than Pat Fitzgerald? Maybe. More passionate coach? No way.	The offense must find replacements in the backfield and receiving corps.	The 'Cats might still sneak into a bowl again.
9. Minnesota	A new stadium on campus is sure to bring pride and all-important revenue.	That new stadium won't help Gophers during October trips to Penn State and Ohio State.	Tim Brewster is turning this ship around ... but there is still much work to be done.
10. Purdue	New coach Danny Hope was given a full year head start to settle into his post.	Considering the talent on hand, we're not sure a decade would have been enough time.	Unfamiliar territory for Purdue fans ... can Boilers stay ahead of Hoosiers?
11. Indiana	The defensive line boasts two of the conference's premier pass rushers.	Without Kellen Lewis, who's going to make plays?	No bowl for Hoosier fans this year. It could be worse, but not much.

Lindy's 2009 ALL-BIG TEN Team

OFFENSE - First Team

QB	Terrelle Pryor	So.	Ohio State
RB	Evan Royster	Jr.	Penn State
RB	John Clay	So.	Wisconsin
WR	Arrelious Benn	Jr.	Illinois
WR	Eric Decker	Sr.	Minnesota
TE	Garrett Graham	Sr.	Wisconsin
C	Stefan Wisniewski	Jr.	Penn State
OL	Gabe Carimi	Jr.	Wisconsin
OL	Justin Boren	Jr.	Ohio State
OL	Dan Doering	Sr.	Iowa
OL	Bryan Bulaga	Jr.	Iowa
AP	David Gilreath	Jr.	Wisconsin
K	Philip Welch	So.	Wisconsin

DEFENSE - First Team

DL	Corey Wootton	Sr.	Northwestern
DL	Jamie Kerlew	Sr.	Indiana
DL	Brandon Graham	Sr.	Michigan
DL	Jared Odrick	Sr.	Penn State
LB	Greg Jones	Jr.	Michigan State
LB	Sean Lee	Sr.	Penn State
LB	Pat Angerer	Sr.	Iowa
DB	Kurt Coleman	Sr.	Ohio State
DB	Traye Simmons	Sr.	Minnesota
DB	Donovan Warren	Jr.	Michigan
DB	Amari Spievey	Jr.	Iowa
P	Zoltan Mesko	Sr.	Michigan

OFFENSE - Second Team

QB	Juice Williams	Sr.	Illinois
RB	Brandon Minor	Sr.	Michigan
RB	Jewel Hampton	So.	Iowa
WR	Mark Dell	Jr.	Michigan State
WR	Martavious Odoms	So.	Michigan
TE	Michael Hoomanawanui	Sr.	Illinois
C	Joel Nitchman	Sr.	Michigan State
OL	Dennis Landolt	Sr.	Penn State
OL	Jon Asamoah	Sr.	Illinois
OL	Stephen Schilling	Jr.	Michigan
OL	Joel Foreman	So.	Michigan State
AP	Arrelious Benn	Jr.	Illinois
K	Brett Swenson	Sr.	Michigan State

DEFENSE - Second Team

DL	Greg Middleton	Sr.	Indiana
DL	Ryan Kerrigan	Jr.	Purdue
DL	Trevor Anderson	Sr.	Michigan State
DL	Cameron Heyward	Jr.	Ohio State
LB	Navorro Bowman	Jr.	Penn State
LB	Martez Wilson	Jr.	Illinois
LB	Obi Ezeh	Jr.	Michigan
DB	Brad Phillips	Sr.	Northwestern
DB	Jay Valai	Jr.	Wisconsin
DB	Chimdi Chekwa	Jr.	Ohio State
DB	Torri Williams	Sr.	Purdue
P	Jeremy Boone	Sr.	Penn State

years ago, before falling off the radar last year (5-7 overall, 3-5 in the Big Ten), and now the Illini are anxious to show they can be more like 2007 than 2008.

Wisconsin is in much the same mode, after a second straight swoon under coach Bret Bielema. The Badgers, after all, went 7-1 in Big Ten games his first year, but then slipped to 5-3, and last year to 3-5.

Another team to watch is Iowa, whose schedule might get in the way of a run for the BCS. Few teams in the country, let alone the conference, are as stacked along the offensive line as the Hawkeyes, and that has been the key to success for Kirk Ferentz's great Iowa teams of the past.

"They're a team I've had tremendous respect for," Indiana coach Bill Lynch said of Iowa. "The consistency ... the toughness ... they always play sound defense and run the ball well."

The missing link in this year's race? Michigan has garnered little respect after failing to qualify for a bowl game last season. The Wolverines are set to go with a freshman quarterback (Tate Forcier) in year two of the Rich Rodriguez era.

Conference coaches are wise enough to never discount the perennial Big Ten powerhouse. Said Minnesota coach Tim Brewster, "Rich Rodriguez is going to have that program back to what they expect at Michigan."

Brewster can speak from experience about turnarounds.

In 2007, his Gophers were one of the worst teams in college football — a one-win team that allowed 410 points. Last year, Brewster's club qualified for the Insight Bowl, and much of that squad, including the bulk of its skill position players and an opportunistic secondary, will return, making Minnesota the dark-horse program to watch.

Northwestern, too, could work its way into the bowl mix again. The Wildcats took a step last season and hope to take another in 2009.

This season figures to be a miserable one, though, in the state of Indiana. The Hoosiers could be strong defensively where nine of 11 starters return, but the team lacks talent on offense, where its best playmaker (Kellen Lewis) was dismissed from the team in April. Purdue is in rebuilding mode, and will struggle to compete in most of its conference games.

— Mike Beacom

Most Valuable Player

Terrelle Pryor, QB, Ohio State

Offensive Player of the Year

Arrelious Benn, WR, Illinois

Defensive Player of the Year

Brandon Graham DE, Michigan

Newcomer of the Year

Hayo Carpenter WR, Minnesota

HONOR ROLL

Most Accurate Passer	Adam Weber	Minnesota
Strongest Arm	Adam Weber	Minnesota
Best Scrambler	Terrelle Pryor	Ohio State
Coolest in the Clutch	Daryll Clark, QB	Penn State
Toughest to Bring Down	John Clay, RB	Wisconsin
Best Hands	Garrett Graham, TE	Wisconsin
Most Dangerous Deep Threat	Mark Dell, WR	Michigan State
Best Pass Blocker	Bryan Bulaga, OT	Iowa
Best Run Blocker	Justin Boren, OG	Ohio State
Best Pass Rusher	Brandon Graham, DE	Michigan
Best Cover Corner	Donovan Warren	Michigan
Special Teams Demon	Troy Stoudermire	Minnesota

The Big Ones

September 5	
Illinois vs. Missouri	Illinois tries to prevent rebuilding Missouri from posting 40-plus points again.
September 12	
USC at Ohio State	Few bowl games will have as much buildup as this dandy.
Notre Dame at Michigan	Here are two coaches who need a big, early victory to satisfy rabid fans.
Iowa at Iowa State	The home team in this fierce rivalry has won in each of the past five years.
Fresno State at Wisconsin	Badgers take on Pat Hill's tough Bulldogs, who are always ready for a fight.
Air Force at Minnesota	The return of "real" football (read: outdoors) to the Land of 10,000 Lakes.
September 19	
California at Minnesota	Cal has won its past three meetings against Big Ten clubs.
Michigan State at Notre Dame	Javon Ringer was the deciding factor in '08, but he's gone.
September 26	
Iowa at Penn State	This game pretty much defines Big Ten-style football.
Illinois at Ohio State	Illinois snapped Buckeyes' 28-game regular season win streak here in 2007.
Michigan State at Wisconsin	Kickers have played the key role in past two meetings of run-first foes.
October 3	
Michigan at Michigan State	Spartan fans try to get a grip on playing the role of favorite in rivalry.
Wisconsin at Minnesota	The Gopher trophy case has an axe-shaped void where dust has settled since 2003.
Northwestern at Purdue	Coach Danny Hope makes Big Ten debut; yeah, but did he beat Notre Dame a week earlier?
October 10	
Michigan State at Illinois	The last time the Spartans visited Champaign, they posted 28 second-quarter points.
Wisconsin at Ohio State	For 58 minutes last season Wisconsin stymied Terrelle Pryor. Then he broke free.
October 17	
Minnesota at Penn State	No kidding — these teams have split their last four meetings.
October 24	
Penn State at Michigan	The Wolverines have won this matchup in three of the past four years.
Iowa at Michigan State	Iowa won virtually every small battle last season, yet still came up short.
October 31	
Michigan at Illinois	Fun: Football on Halloween. Scary: Trying to contain Juice Williams.
November 7	
Ohio State at Penn State	Buckeyes need to average better than the 2 yards per carry they did last year.
November 14	
Michigan at Wisconsin	Badger fans still baffled by how their club gave away last year's meeting.
November 21	
Ohio State at Michigan	Michigan coach Rich Rodriguez tries to close the gap in his second season.
Penn State at Michigan State	Certainly not the "biggest" game of the final Big Ten weekend ... likely the best.
Minnesota at Iowa	Iowa handed Minnesota its worst-ever Big Ten beating last year, 55-0.

TERRELLE PRYOR

Photo by Jim Rinaldi/Icon SMI

Bowl Connection

Big Ten #1 BCS National Championship Game if #1 or 2, otherwise Rose

Big Ten #2 Capital One vs. SEC

Big Ten #3 Outback vs. SEC

Big Ten #4 Champs Sports vs. ACC

Big Ten #5 Alamo vs. Big 12

Big Ten #6 Insight vs. Big 12

Big Ten #7 Motor City vs. MAC

Top 10 NFL Talent

1. Brandon Graham	DE	Sr.	Michigan	Lacks ideal size to play in a 4-3 but has great pass-rush instincts.
2. Arrelious Benn	WR	Jr.	Illinois	Scouts drool when a prospect possesses both size and athleticism.
3. Corey Wootton	DE	Sr.	Northwestern	Stands 6-7 and gobbled up 10 sacks last year with little help.
4. Garrett Graham	TE	Sr.	Wisconsin	Many believe he'll be a better NFL tight end than Travis Beckum.
5. Bryan Bulaga	T	Jr.	Iowa	Good feet, height, and he tips the scale above 300.
6. Navorro Bowman	LB	Jr.	Penn State	Tackle machine capable of making plays behind enemy lines.
7. John Clay	RB	So.	Wisconsin	A load who is latest in a long line of bruising Badger backs.
8. Kurt Coleman	S	Sr.	Ohio State	Few college football safeties are as seasoned ... needs to add bulk.
9. Sean Lee	LB	Sr.	Penn State	His knee is a knock against him; his heart is pure PSU linebacker.
10. Eric Decker	WR	Sr.	Minnesota	A possession receiver who has the measureables teams require.

1. OHIO STATE: The Buckeyes jumped out of the gate early, securing a majority of their commitments before the season got into high gear. As usual, Ohio State did a lot of its damage in its backyard. The Buckeyes also went national to score some other key prospects, such as five-star linebacker Dorian Bell and his five-star teammate Corey Brown from Pennsylvania. More skill help is on the way with star wide receiver Duron Carter and running back Jaamal Berry.

2. MICHIGAN: While it was a disappointing season on the field for the Wolverines, there were only a few disappointments on the recruiting front. Coach Rich Rodriguez was able to find some skill-position players — led by quarterback Tate Forcier and athlete Jeremy Gallon — who should help immediately. Rodriguez also brought in linemen who are highly athletic, which definitely will help because of the Wolverines' style of play. Much-needed help also was added in the secondary. The Wolverines were also able to turn wide receiver Je'Ron Stokes from Tennessee on National Signing Day. Five-star defensive tackle William Campbell was one of the biggest headline-grabbers nationally.

3. MICHIGAN STATE: The Spartans were one of the nation's biggest surprises, and they surprised a lot of local observers with their dominating in-state class. Led by recruiting coordinator Mark Staten and ace recruiter Dan Enos, Michigan State scored some major head-to-head wins against rival Michigan. Then the Spartans were able to snag top-100 prospect David Barrent away from Iowa and add plenty of depth at the offensive skill positions. The line class was one of the best in the conference.

4. PENN STATE: Penn State didn't draw the type of national headlines that Ohio State and Michigan did in recruiting, but the group heading to Happy Valley definitely will keep the Nittany Lions on the right track. There are plenty of headliners to go along with quarterback Kevin Newsome. The group is heavy on the offensive line, and there are some great ones in the group, led by Eric Shrive. The secondary also is special with four-star prospects Derrick Thomas and Darrell Givens at cornerback.

5. ILLINOIS: Quarterback Nathan Scheelhaase was one of the nation's top-ranked quarterbacks and should be the heir apparent to Juice Williams for the Illini. Scheelhaase is athletic and heady, and players rally around him. Landing Scheelhaase, running back Bud Golden and offensive lineman Leon Hill early in the process were the ups. Losing in-state defensive end Craig Drummond to Ole Miss was one of the downs.

6. MINNESOTA: The offense will get a major boost from four-star receiver Hayo Carpenter from the junior college ranks. The Gophers are also excited about quarterback Moses Alipate and the solid line group that will be blocking for him. Athlete Bryant Allen was a major steal out of Missouri; he's one of the nation's top two-sport athletes.

7. WISCONSIN: This class fills holes at almost every position. Wisconsin coaches are excited about quarterback Jon Budmayr, four solid offensive linemen, an elite defensive end group led by David Gilbert and Shelby Harris, and some athletic defensive backs. The Badgers did a nice job locally, and they also did plenty of damage in Ohio and in Florida. Landing Gilbert, who was heavily recruited by SEC programs, was a coup.

8. NORTHWESTERN: The Wildcats have to recruit a different type of player than the rest of the teams in the conference. Quarterback Evan Watkins has the tools to be a starter in the future; running back Arby Fields was a steal out of California and the offensive line class is stout. Help also was added with a deep linebacker group and some solid defensive ends.

9. INDIANA: Though Indiana finished toward the bottom of the Big Ten, this class was a step forward for the Hoosiers. The Hoosiers secured playmakers at quarterback — two, actually, with Dusty Kiel and Edward Wright-Baker — running back, receiver and on the line. Lawrence Barnett is a nice in-state signee at cornerback, and Adam Replogle is a stout defensive tackle.

10. IOWA: Iowa fans knew it was going to be a smaller-than-normal class this year. It's tough to have a highly ranked class when you sign only around 20 players, but this is still a nice haul for the Hawkeyes. Iowa reeled in star running back Brandon Wegher. Brad Rogers has a shot to be a real steal as a big, bruising back. Help was added along the offensive line, and Iowa went heavy at linebacker.

11. PURDUE: Instead of sticking to the Midwest, which had been kind to the previous staff, Purdue went hard and heavy to Florida in hopes of luring more speed. Fourteen players from the Sunshine State are heading to Purdue, and coaches are excited about quarterback Rob Henry. Help on the interior defensive line is on the way.

TOP 20 INCOMING RECRUITS

RK	NAME	HT/WT	POS	HOMETOWN/SCHOOL	COLLEGE
1.	William Campbell	6-5/317	DT	Detroit Cass Tech	Michigan
2.	Corey Brown	6-0/180	DB	Monroeville (Pa.) Gateway	Ohio State
3.	Dorian Bell	6-0/226	LB	Monroeville (Pa.) Gateway	Ohio State
4.	Justin Turner	6-2/186	DB	Massillon (Ohio) Washington	Michigan
5.	Marcus Hall	6-5/290	OL	Cleveland Glenville	Ohio State
6.	Jaamal Berry	5-10/185	RB	Miami Palmetto	Ohio State
7.	Edwin Baker	5-10/204	RB	Oak Park (Mich.) High	Michigan State
8.	Terry Hawthorne	6-0/168	WR	East St. Louis (Ill.) High	Illinois
9.	Jamie Wood	6-2/190	DB	Pickerington (Ohio) Central	Ohio State
10.	Justin Green	5-10/178	RB	Louisville (Ky.) Male	Illinois
11.	David Barrent	6-8/290	OL	West Des Moines (Iowa) Valley	Michigan State
12.	Eric Shrive	6-7/302	OL	Scranton (Pa.) West Scranton	Penn State
13.	Duron Carter	6-2/183	WR	Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas	Ohio State
14.	Je'Ron Stokes	6-1/178	WR	Philadelphia Northeast	Michigan
15.	Chris Norman	6-2/207	LB	Detroit Renaissance	Michigan State
16.	Chris Fields	6-0/181	WR	Painesville (Ohio) Harvey	Ohio State
17.	Keenan Davis	6-3/200	WR	Cedar Rapids (Iowa) Washington	Iowa
18.	Michael Carter	5-11/154	DB	Pompano Beach (Fla.) Ely	Minnesota
19.	Andrew Maxwell	6-3/192	QB	Midland (Mich.) High	Michigan State
20.	C.J. Barnett	6-1/181	DB	Clayton (Ohio) Northmont	Ohio State

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR:

Quarterback Tate Forcier will get every opportunity to win the starting job for Michigan. Forcer, a four-star prospect, could be the opening game starter. He was the first national recruit Michigan landed in the 2009 class.

TOP SLEEPER:

Sunbury (Ohio) Big Walnut linebacker Will Studlien was on his way to becoming one of the most heavily recruited linebackers in the nation. But he tore an ACL playing rugby before the start of his senior season. He was able to make it back late in the season and ended up signing with Northwestern.

LIKELY TO BE THE BEST NFL PLAYER:

Michigan signee Justin Turner can do it all. Not too many safeties have his ball-hawking ability. He was impressive in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl. He has the physical tools to be a great pro player, but it is his football IQ that helps separate him from others.

NO. 1 SIGNING COUP:

The job Illinois coach Ron Zook did with four-star defensive back Justin Green of Louisville was amazing. Green, a longtime Ohio State commitment, snuck into Champaign the final weekend for an official visit. Zook then was able to get him to switch to Illinois.

BIGGEST MISS:

None of the top-five players in Indiana ended up signing with a Big Ten program. Notre Dame was able to snag No. 2 Zach Martin out of Indianapolis, but top-ranked Montez Robinson bolted to Georgia, No. 3 Jordan Barnes flipped from Michigan to Oklahoma State late in the process, No. 4 Jordan Luallen went to Georgia Tech and No. 5 Morgan Newton ended up at Kentucky.

BEST RECRUITING STAFF:

Nobody does a better job than Ohio State. What separates them from the others is their ability to go into other areas and have plenty of success. The job they do each year in Florida is remarkable. They go South each year and pull away some talented skill-position players. They also do a nice job in the states that surround Ohio.

OHIO STATE BUCKEYES

NATIONAL RANK 8

Big Ten rank: 1 | Record: 10-3 | Big Ten record: 7-1 (1-1st) | Stadium: Ohio Stadium (102,329)

Buckeyes in A Box

COACH: Jim Tressel — At Ohio State: 83-19, 8 years; overall: 218-76-2, 23 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jim Bollman
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jim Heacock
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2008
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 1999
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 4 offense, 8 defense, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Terrelle Pryor, RB Dan Herron, RB Brandon Saine, WR DeVier Posey, DE Thaddeus Gibson, LB Ross Homan, SS Kurt Coleman, FS Anderson Russell
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Pryor is incredibly dangerous with the ball in his hands. He's a threat to run or pass. The defensive line should be its best in years, and the secondary will be strong with a pair of three-year starters in safeties Coleman and Russell.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: All of the skill players, with the exception of Pryor, are new. That is a lot of new faces to break in quickly. The Buckeyes seem to be thin at receiver, where Posey is the top target despite just 11 career catches.

OFFENSE

The Buckeyes were decimated by graduation and early defections to the NFL, losing all their skill position starters except quarterback Terrelle Pryor. Only Pryor and center Michael Brewster will start at the same position at which they ended last season.

Sophomore DeVier Posey has one career touchdown catch, but he is expected to be Pryor's top target after Brian Robiskie and Brian Hartline left for the NFL, taking 40 percent of the Buckeyes' 2008 receptions with them.

Chris "Beanie" Wells and his 3,382 career rushing yards are gone, leaving sophomore Dan Herron and junior Brandon Saine. That's not all bad, though.

Herron (439 yards last year; six touchdowns) and Saine, along with incoming star recruit Jamaal Berry, are better fits than Wells for the spread option style the Buckeyes tinkered with last season.

Saine is likely the fastest player on offense, but injuries and a lack of vision taking carries out of the backfield have buried him on the depth chart. Saine had a tremendous spring, though, and could excel in an option style where he can take a pitch and go.

DEFENSE

Losing a pair of All-Americans like James Laurinaitis and Malcolm Jenkins is cause for concern. The bright side is the depth and experience Ohio State returns in the front and back of the defense.

Safeties Kurt Coleman and Anderson Russell are each three-year starters and will help offset the loss of Jenkins, last season's Thorpe Award winner. The inexperience at corner, along with the overwhelming experience at safety, could mean the Buckeyes will play more zone and less man to help cover any shortages at cornerback.

Tackles Doug Worthington, Dexter Larimore and Todd Denlinger will continue to rotate, while end Thaddeus Gibson finally emerged over the second half of last season as the pass rushing threat the Buckeyes' defense had been missing, leading the team with five sacks.

Coach Jim Tressel has been raving about linebacker Austin Spitler for two years, who has been relegated to special teams duty as Laurinaitis' backup. Now he joins returning starter Ross Homan in the lineup.

The other starting linebacker will come from a mix that includes juniors Tyler Moeller and Brian Rolle. Moeller is a hybrid defensive back/linebacker who fits well into nickel schemes. Rolle is a bit undersized at 5-11, but packs a wallop at 221 pounds and has been a key special teams performer.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Ray Small led the league in punt returns, averaging more than 15 yards per attempt, including a touchdown.

The Bucks were a woeful 108th in the nation in kickoff returns, averaging less than 20 yards per return. Sophomore Lamaar Thomas helped that cause toward the end of the season, averaging 21.6 yards on 16 returns.

Senior Aaron Pettrey has a powerful leg, connecting on four career field goals beyond 50 yards.

The biggest concern is at punter, where fifth-year senior Jon Thoma is the early favorite to replace four-year starter A.J. Trapasso.

OVERVIEW

Ohio State's success will depend on Pryor's growth. Pryor, now a 10-game starter, will be expected to complete more passes while not turning the ball over. Just being in the weakened Big Ten, though, should assure the Buckeyes of at least nine victories.

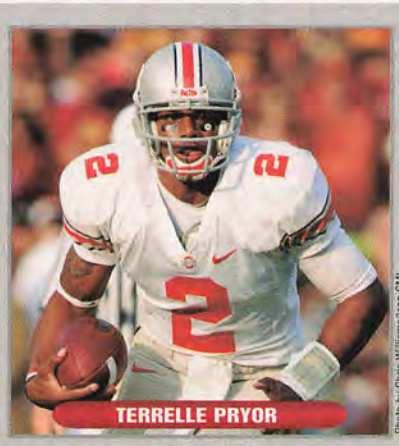

TERRELLE PRYOR

Photo by Chris Williams/Icon SMI

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Terrelle Pryor***	**6-6**	**235**	**So.**
	Joe Bauserman	6-2	220	So.
RB	Dan Herron	5-10	193	So.
	Brandon Saine	6-1	217	Jr.
FB	Jermil Martin	6-0	227	Fr.
	Adam Homan	6-4	235	Fr.
WR	DeVier Posey	6-3	205	So.
	Taurian Washington	6-2	179	Jr.
WR	Ray Small	5-11	180	Sr.
	Dane Sanzenbacher	5-11	175	Jr.
TE	Jake Ballard	6-6	256	Sr.
	Jake Stoneburner	6-5	230	Fr.
LT	**Jim Cordle***	**6-4**	**297**	**Sr.**
	J.B. Shugarts	6-8	298	So.
LG	Justin Boren	6-3	315	Jr.
	Connor Smith	6-4	321	Jr.
C	**Michael Brewster***	**6-5**	**296**	**So.**
	Jim Cordle	6-4	297	Sr.
RG	**Bryant Browning***	**6-4**	**312**	**Sr.**
	Evan Blankenship	6-3	290	So.
RT	Mike Adams	6-8	322	So.
	J.B. Shugarts	6-8	298	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Thaddeus Gibson***	**6-2**	**240**	**Jr.**
	Nathan Williams	6-3	245	So.
DT	**Dexter Larimore***	**6-2**	**300**	**Jr.**
	Todd Denlinger	6-2	292	Sr.
DT	**Doug Worthington***	**6-6**	**276**	**Sr.**
	Garrett Goebel	6-5	280	Fr.
DE	**Cameron Heyward***	**6-6**	**287**	**Jr.**
	Lawrence Wilson	6-4	274	Sr.
LB	**Ross Homan***	**6-0**	**229**	**Jr.**
	Brian Rolle	5-11	221	Jr.
LB	Austin Spitler	6-3	234	Sr.
	Etienne Sabino	6-3	232	So.
LB	Tyler Moeller	6-0	216	Jr.
	Storm Klein	6-3	225	Fr.
CB	**Chimdi Chekwa***	**6-0**	**188**	**Jr.**
	Andre Amos	6-1	183	Sr.
CB	Devon Torrence	6-1	193	Jr.
	Andre Amos	6-1	183	Sr.
SS	**Kurt Coleman***	**5-11**	**188**	**Sr.**
	Jermale Hines	6-2	210	Jr.
FS	**Anderson Russell***	**6-0**	**205**	**Sr.**
	Aaron Gant	6-0	194	Sr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Aaron Pettrey***	**6-2**	**199**	**Sr.**
P	Jon Thoma	6-2	201	Sr.

*** Returning Starters in Bold**

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	NAVY
Sept. 12	USC
Sept. 19	vs. Toledo (Cleveland, OH)
Sept. 26	ILLINOIS
Oct. 3	at Indiana
Oct. 10	WISCONSIN
Oct. 17	at Purdue
Oct. 24	MINNESOTA
Oct. 31	NEW MEXICO STATE
Nov. 7	at Penn State
Nov. 14	IOWA
Nov. 21	at Michigan

2008 Results

(10-3, 7-1)

W	YOUNGSTOWN STATE	43-0
W	OHIO	26-14
L	at USC	3-35
W	TROY	28-10
W	MINNESOTA	34-21
W	at Wisconsin	20-17
W	PURDUE	16-3
W	at Michigan State	45-7
L	PENN STATE	6-13
W	at Northwestern	45-10
W	at Illinois	30-20
W	MICHIGAN	42-7
	Fiesta Bowl	
L	vs Texas	21-24

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.6	45
Rushing	192.5	24
Passing	150.2	105
Total	342.7	76
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	13.9	6
Rushing	110.2	18
Passing	183.5	25
Total	293.8	14
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 16	+ 1.23	6

PENN STATE NITTANY LIONS

NATIONAL RANK 11

Big Ten rank: 2 | Record: 11-2 | Big Ten record: 7-1 (T-1st) | Stadium: Beaver Stadium (107,282)

Nittany Lions in A Box

COACH: Joe Paterno — At Penn State and overall: 383-126-3, 43 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Galen Hall
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tom Bradley
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2008, co-champs
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2004
RETURNING STARTERS: 10; 5 offense, 4 defense, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Daryll Clark, RB Evan Royster, C Stefen Wisniewski, DT Jared Odrick, DE Jack Crawford, LB Sean Lee, LB Navorro Bowman
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The offense has playmakers, led by Clark, Royster and Stephfon Green. The offensive line might be more athletic than last year. The front seven on defense might be as strong as any in the country, led by Odrick, Lee and Bowman.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The wide receivers and the offensive linemen don't have nearly the experience they had last year. Bowman's status was uncertain after he violated terms of his probation in the spring. The defensive backs have a mere nine combined starts.

OFFENSE

Penn State has enough pieces in place on offense to make another run at the Big Ten title, even though three of the top four receivers in school history graduated.

Quarterback Daryll Clark accounted for a school-record 29 touchdowns last season and finished second in voting for Big Ten MVP honors. With only true freshman Kevin Newsome, who enrolled in January, and two walk-ons behind him, Clark was off limits to spring contact.

Clark suffered a concussion last year at Ohio State and had to leave before Penn State rallied to win.

"I'm going to really work on protecting my body," Clark said. "I'm going to avoid some hits I took last year by sliding or getting out of bounds. I can't afford to have another concussion. I'm important to this team."

So are running backs Evan Royster and Stephfon Green, and tight ends Mickey Shuler and Andrew Quarless, who have all been productive. Royster ran for 1,236 yards and averaged 6.5 yards a carry last year.

Penn State has more height than last season at receiver, but is short on experience.

Brett Brackett, a prep quarterback, and former walk-on Graham Zug, have seen the most playing time, making seven starts, combining for 24 catches and three touchdowns last season.

The offensive line will be the biggest question mark. Stefen Wisniewski, who will move from right guard to center, and right tackle Dennis Landolt are back.

DeOn'tae Pannell, Johnnie Troutman and Lou Eliades are the leading candidates to fill the holes, but none has started a game.

DEFENSE

Penn State's new secondary was walking in the spring, not running.

"I'm very concerned about it," coach Joe Paterno said. "We have a long, long way to go to be a good secondary. We're not even close."

Cornerbacks A.J. Wallace and Knowledge Timmons and safeties Drew Astorino and Cedric Jeffries are the leading candidates. Wallace is the only one who has made more than one career start.

Sean Lee, a two-year starter and potential All-American, returns at linebacker after missing last season with a knee injury. Lee's exact position won't be decided until after Paterno determines how he will discipline All-Big Ten pick Navorro Bowman, who violated terms of his probation in April.

Josh Hull replaced Lee in the middle last year. If Bowman misses games, Michael Mauti will start on the weak side and Lee on the strong side.

Penn State's front four might be dominant again. Jared Odrick and Ollie Ogbu return at tackle, along with Abe Koroma. They helped the Nittany Lions rank among the nation's top 10 in total, rushing and scoring defense last year.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Jeremy Boone, who led the Big Ten last year, returns for his third season as the punter. Collin Wagner replaces Kevin Kelly, the school's all-time leading scorer, as the kicker.

OVERVIEW

The secondary is the only question mark on defense. The offense has lots of weapons, but it could take time for quarterback Daryll Clark, the receivers and the linemen to mesh. If the offensive line jells quickly, Penn State can contend again for the Big Ten championship.

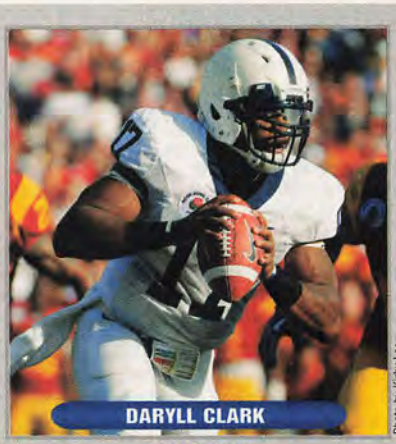

DARYLL CLARK

Photo by Kirby Lee

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Daryll Clark***	**6-2**	**233**	**Sr.**
	Kevin Newsome	6-2	225	Fr.
TB	**Evan Royster***	**6-1**	**209**	**Jr.**
	Stephfon Green	5-10	192	So.
WR	Brett Brackett	6-6	231	Jr.
	Derek Moye	6-5	195	So.
WR	Chaz Powell	6-1	195	So.
	A.J. Price	6-4	173	Fr.
WR	Graham Zug	6-2	178	Jr.
	James McDonald	6-2	204	Sr.
TE	**Mickey Shuler***	**6-4**	**249**	**Sr.**
	Andrew Quarless	6-5	253	Sr.
LT	DeOn'tae Pannell	6-5	313	So.
	Nerraw McCormack	6-5	295	Sr.
LG	Johnnie Troutman	6-4	322	So.
	Matt Stankiewitch	6-3	290	Fr.
C	**Stefen Wisniewski***	**6-3**	**302**	**Jr.**
	Quinn Barham	6-3	288	So.
RG	Lou Eliades	6-4	305	Jr.
	James Terry	6-3	319	Fr.
RT	**Dennis Landolt***	**6-4**	**303**	**Sr.**
	Ako Poti	6-3	305	Sr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
LE	Jack Crawford	6-5	262	So.
	Eric Latimore	6-6	264	So.
LT	**Jared Odrick***	**6-5**	**306**	**Sr.**
	Abe Koroma	6-3	317	Jr.
RT	**Ollie Ogbu***	**6-1**	**292**	**Jr.**
	Devon Still	6-5	305	So.
RE	Kevion Latham	6-2	248	So.
	Jonathan Stewart	6-2	247	So.
LB	Sean Lee	6-2	236	Sr.
	Michael Mauti	6-2	224	So.
LB	**Josh Hull***	**6-3**	**236**	**Sr.**
	Chris Colasanti	6-2	235	Jr.
LB	**Navorro Bowman***	**6-1**	**230**	**Jr.**
	Nate Stupar	6-1	226	So.
CB	A.J. Wallace	6-1	201	Sr.
	Devin Fentress	5-10	169	Sr.
CB	Knowledge Timmons	5-10	187	Sr.
	D'Anton Lynn	6-1	198	So.
SS	Cedric Jeffries	6-2	203	Jr.
	Andrew Dailey	6-2	221	So.
FS	Drew Astorino	5-10	193	So.
	Nick Sukay	6-1	208	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Collin Wagner	5-9	170	Jr.
P	**Jeremy Boone***	**5-9**	**184**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	AKRON
Sept. 12	SYRACUSE
Sept. 19	TEMPLE
Sept. 26	IOWA
Oct. 3	at Illinois
Oct. 10	EASTERN ILLINOIS
Oct. 17	MINNESOTA
Oct. 24	at Michigan
Oct. 31	at Northwestern
Nov. 7	OHIO STATE
Nov. 14	INDIANA
Nov. 21	at Michigan State

2008 Results

(11-2, 7-1)

W	COASTAL CAROLINA	66-10
W	OREGON STATE	45-14
W	at Syracuse	55-13
W	TEMPLE	45-3
W	ILLINOIS	38-24
W	at Purdue	20-6
W	at Wisconsin	48-7
W	MICHIGAN	46-17
W	at Ohio State	13-6
L	at Iowa	23-24
W	INDIANA	34-7
W	MICHIGAN STATE	49-18
	Rose Bowl	
L	vs USC	24-38

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	38.9	11
Rushing	205.8	17
Passing	243.1	37
Total	448.9	14
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	14.4	8
Rushing	93.2	8
Passing	186.9	27
Total	280.1	8
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+7	+0.54	25

MICHIGAN STATE SPARTANS

NATIONAL RANK 24

Big Ten rank: 3 | Record: 9-4 | Big Ten record: 6-2 (3rd) | Stadium: Spartan Stadium (75,005)

Spartans in A Box

COACH: Mark Dantonio — At Michigan State: 16-10, 2 years; overall: 34-27, 5 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Don Treadwell
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Pat Narduzzi
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1990, co-champions
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2006
RETURNING STARTERS: 17; 7 offense, 8 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: LB Greg Jones, LB Eric Gordon, DE Trevor Anderson, DT Oren Wilson, LT Rocco Cironi, C Joel Nitchman, WR Blair White, TE Charlie Gantt
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Michigan State should be very good after having a middle-of-the-pack defense last year. Anderson is one of the best pass rushers in the Big Ten, and Jones destroys the run. Offensively, there's strength in numbers at receiver.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Scoring could be an issue early with a new quarterback, new faces in the running game and a new right side of the offensive line. Someone must emerge up front to keep double teams off Anderson and put more pressure on opposing quarterbacks.

OFFENSE

Running back Javon Ringer and quarterback Brian Hoyer were the driving forces behind Michigan State's Capital One Bowl appearance last year, its first Jan. 1 bowl game since 2000. That duo is gone, leaving the Spartans with two important position battles.

Sophomores Kirk Cousins and Keith Nichol, a transfer from Oklahoma, ran neck-and-neck for the starting quarterback job in the spring. They will start off sharing snaps this fall.

While Hoyer was the consummate pocket passer, Cousins and Nichol are good enough athletes that Michigan State added some option elements to the playbook. Coach Mark Dantonio said both showed moxie and leadership in the spring.

Sophomores Ashton Leggett and Andre Anderson, and true freshmen Edwin Baker and Larry Caper, are among six backs vying to replace Ringer, who rushed for 1,637 yards and 22 touchdowns.

Baker and Caper might be the two most talented backs on the team, so it won't be a surprise if one cracks the starting lineup.

Whoever wins the job will have to navigate behind a line that welcomes a new right side in tackle J'Michael Deane and guard Jared McGaha.

There is experience in the receiving corps, where Blair White, B.J. Cunningham and big-play Mark Dell all caught at least 36 balls a season ago. Tight end Charlie Gantt is a potential all-conference selection.

DEFENSE

The strength of the team lies in a defense that returns eight starters, including every linebacker.

Greg Jones, who'll play exclusively middle linebacker this year, led MSU in tackles in each of the past two years. He rarely gets sucked in by blocks and generally destroys the run.

Seven of eight defensive backs that contributed regularly last season are back.

Cornerbacks Chris L. Rucker and Ross Weaver have struggled with injuries, but Rucker especially is primed for a breakout season if he can stay healthy. The lone loss, safety Otis Wiley, is big, but backup Trenton Robinson had a great spring.

Defensive end Trevor Anderson had eight sacks last year, and Oren Wilson is a powerful run-plugger inside. Redshirt freshman Tyler Hoover is another talent to watch at end.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Spartans might have the best set of specialists in the Big Ten in kicker Brett Swenson and punter Aaron Bates. Swenson is on pace to set school marks for most field goals and extra points in a career.

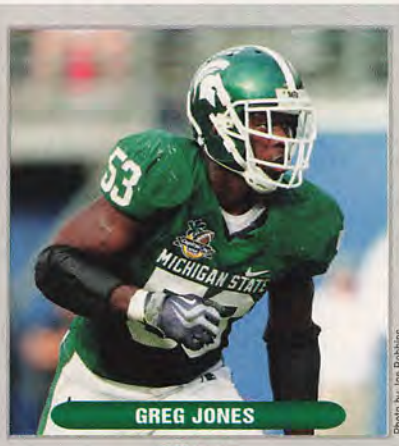
Bates landed nearly a third of his punts inside the 20 and saw his punting average rise from his freshman mark of 39.7 to 42.

The Spartans lack flash and experience on returns. Speedy sophomore Keshawn Martin is an option on punts and kickoffs.

OVERVIEW

MSU took a surprising step forward last year in Dantonio's second season. The Spartans won with a heavy dose of Ringer, timely plays by Hoyer and an opportunistic defense.

The peripherals weren't great. They ranked middle-of-the-pack in most categories and lost to the four best teams on their schedule. There's an influx of young talent coming. The challenge will be to stay consistent until it's ready and keep ahead of the "others" in the Big Ten.



GREG JONES

Photo by Joe Robbins

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Kirk Cousins	6-3	202	So.
	Keith Nichol	6-2	212	So.
RB	Ashton Leggett	5-11	235	So.
	A.J. Jimmerson	5-10	205	Sr.
FB	Andrew Hawken	6-2	238	Sr.
	Josh Rouse	6-3	242	Sr.
WR	**Blair White***	**6-2**	**205**	**Sr.**
	Mark Dell*	**6-2**	**196**	**Jr.**
WR	**B.J. Cunningham***	**6-2**	**210**	**So.**
	Keshawn Martin	6-0	186	So.
TE	**Charlie Gantt***	**6-4**	**245**	**Jr.**
	Brian Linthicum	6-4	235	So.
LT	**Rocco Cironi***	**6-6**	**308**	**Sr.**
	Brendon Moss	6-6	284	Sr.
LG	**Joel Foreman***	**6-3**	**310**	**So.**
	Ethan Ruhland	6-6	287	Fr.
C	**Joel Nitchman***	**6-3**	**296**	**Sr.**
	John Stipek	6-5	306	Sr.
RG	Jared McGaha	6-6	289	So.
	Chris McDonald	6-5	285	Fr.
RT	J'Michael Deane	6-5	297	Jr.
	D.J. Young	6-5	305	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Trevor Anderson***	**6-2**	**259**	**Sr.**
	David Rolf	6-3	228	So.
DT	**Oren Wilson***	**6-3**	**286**	**Jr.**
	Ishmyl Johnson	6-5	272	So.
DT	Jerel Worthy	6-3	297	Fr.
	Kevin Pickelman	6-3	255	So.
DE	Tyler Hoover	6-7	268	Fr.
	Colin Neely	6-1	245	Jr.
LB	**Eric Gordon***	**6-0**	**223**	**Jr.**
	John Misch	6-2	205	Jr.
LB	**Greg Jones***	**6-1**	**222**	**Jr.**
	Adam Decker*	**6-2**	**242**	**Sr.**
LB	Brandon Denson	5-11	228	Sr.
	Chris Norman	6-2	219	Fr.
CB	**Ross Weaver***	**6-1**	**204**	**Sr.**
	Jeremy Ware	5-10	181	Sr.
CB	**Chris L. Rucker***	**6-2**	**197**	**Jr.**
	Johnny Adams	5-11	165	So.
SS	**Dan Fortener***	**6-1**	**203**	**Sr.**
	Brynden Trawick	6-3	222	Fr.
FS	Kendell Davis-Clark	5-11	206	Sr.
	Trenton Robinson	5-10	190	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Brett Swenson***	**5-8**	**175**	**Sr.**
P	**Aaron Bates***	**6-0**	**190**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	MONTANA STATE
Sept. 12	CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Sept. 19	at Notre Dame
Sept. 26	at Wisconsin
Oct. 3	MICHIGAN
Oct. 10	at Illinois
Oct. 17	NORTHWESTERN
Oct. 24	IOWA
Oct. 31	at Minnesota
Nov. 7	WESTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 14	at Purdue
Nov. 21	PENN STATE

2008 Results

	(9-4,6-2)	
L	at California	31-38
W	EASTERN MICHIGAN	42-10
W	FLORIDA ATLANTIC	17-0
W	NOTRE DAME	23-7
W	at Indiana	42-29
W	IOWA	16-13
W	at Northwestern	37-20
L	OHIO STATE	7-45
W	at Michigan	35-21
W	WISCONSIN	25-24
W	PURDUE	21-7
L	at Penn State	18-49
	Capital One Bowl	
L	vs Georgia	12-24

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.1	62
Rushing	130.2	77
Passing	213.3	62
Total	343.5	74
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	22.1	41
Rushing	142.5	67
Passing	213.4	69
Total	355.9	58
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 2	+ 0.15	49

FIGHTING ILLINI

NATIONAL RANK 27

Big Ten rank: 4 | Record: 5-7 | Big Ten record: 3-5 (T-6th) | Stadium: Memorial Stadium (62,870)

Fighting Illini in A Box

COACH: Ron Zook — At Illinois: 18-30, 4 years; overall: 41-44, 7 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Schultz
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Dan Disch, Curt Mallory
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2001
LAST BOWL: 2007 season, Rose
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 8 offense, 6 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Juice Williams, WR Arrelious Benn, WR Jarred Fayson, LB Martez Wilson, DT Sirod Williams, DT Corey Liuget
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Led by the combination of Williams and Benn, Illinois should have a high-octane passing game, and that could open some holes for the running game. The overall talent base also is encouraging.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Illinois is unproven in so many places on defense, especially at linebacker, that it will need to get its act together quickly against a tough early schedule — or risk digging a deep hole. The Illini learned last year that a strong passing game comes with no guarantees unless other areas are sound.

OFFENSE

Illinois, which led the Big Ten in passing last year after topping the league in rushing in 2006 and 2007, is in position to keep rolling.

Fourth-year starting quarterback Juice Williams has an impressive stable of receivers, led by All-America candidate Arrelious Benn.

Williams will be working with new coordinator Mike Schultz, who was hired from TCU to replace Mike Locksley, who became the head coach at New Mexico.

The read-option offense that suits the strengths of Williams, a strong-armed thrower and hard-headed runner, won't change noticeably under Schultz. The big task for Williams, who led the Big Ten in passing and total offense last fall, is to curb the untimely interceptions that contributed to Illinois failing to put together a winning record last season.

At running back, powerful sophomores Jason Ford and Mikel Leshoure are threatening to overtake returning starter Daniel Dufrene and junior Troy Pollard. The position looks good, but won't be sorted out until fall camp.

A line that underachieved while battling injuries last fall has the talent to be solid.

DEFENSE

The line has the unit's best combination of youth and experience. Fifth-year tackle Sirod Williams, who redshirted because of a knee injury in 2008, is back. So is sophomore Corey Liuget — pronounced "legit" — who could be an inside force.

If junior Josh Brent, who missed spring drills due to a pending legal issue, is available, defensive tackle could be a strength. At end, fourth-year starter Doug Pilcher leads a group that has shown flashes.

The secondary has potential. Senior cornerback Dere Hicks, a three-year starter, is solid. Tavon Wilson learned on the job last year, and fellow sophomore Miami Thomas has the tools to step up. Thomas missed last season with a knee injury after showing promise in 2007.

More boost could come from senior free safety Donsay Hardeman, who started eight games before suffering a neck injury that required surgery.

A lack of linebacker experience is worrisome. Martez Wilson, a former marquee recruit who finished 14th in the Big Ten in tackles but left people wanting more, moved to middle linebacker this spring after playing outside last season.

The Wilson move, made out of necessity, will be given another look in fall camp. Wilson's speed-and-power combination makes him an intriguing candidate to succeed Brit Miller, who led the Big Ten tackles in 2008.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Placekicker Matt Eller and punter Anthony Santella return, although Derek Dimke could push for the placekicking job. Illinois has a host of return candidates who have impressive potential, led by Arrelious Benn and A.J. Jenkins, who returned a kickoff 96 yards for a touchdown vs. Indiana.

Illinois ranked 10th in the Big Ten in kickoff coverage and punting, 11th in punt returns and fifth in kickoff returns.

OVERVIEW

Considering all the questions this team has on defense, it's not easy to foresee Illinois bouncing back strongly, particularly because of a dangerous schedule. The Illini play eight bowl teams from last season, including three (Penn State, Ohio State and Cincinnati) that played in BCS games.

On the other hand, there's a lot to like about the offense, and coach Ron Zook heads into his fifth season armed with athletic recruits.

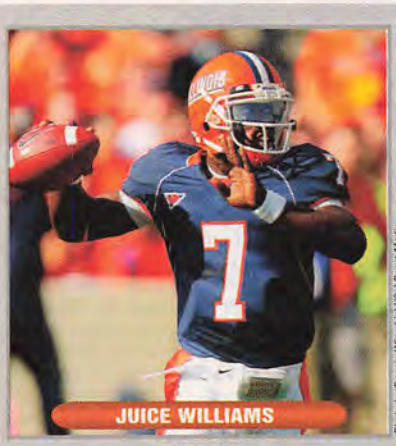

JUICE WILLIAMS

Photo by Dennis Wierzbicki/Cal Sport Media

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Juice Williams***	**6-2**	**235**	**Sr.**
	Eddie McGee	6-4	210	Jr.
RB	**Daniel Dufrene***	**5-11**	**205**	**Sr.**
	Jason Ford	6-0	230	So.
WR	**Jeff Cumberland***	**6-5**	**255**	**Sr.**
	Cordale Scott	6-3	215	So.
WR	**Arrelious Benn***	**6-2**	**220**	**Jr.**
	Chris Duvalt	5-11	175	Sr.
WR	Jarred Fayson	6-0	215	Jr.
	A.J. Jenkins	6-0	185	So.
TE	**Michael Hoomanawanui***	**6-5**	**270**	**Sr.**
	Hubie Graham	6-4	245	So.
LT	**Jeff Allen***	**6-5**	**310**	**So.**
	Craig Wilson	6-5	320	So.
LG	Randall Hunt	6-6	320	Jr.
	Graham Pocic	6-7	320	Fr.
C	**Eric Block***	**6-3**	**290**	**Sr.**
	Ryan Sedlacek	6-4	300	Fr.
RG	**Jon Asamoah***	**6-5**	**315**	**Sr.**
	Jack Cornell	6-5	315	So.
RT	Ryan Palmer	6-7	310	Jr.
	Corey Lewis	6-6	315	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Doug Pilcher***	**6-5**	**265**	**Sr.**
	Clay Nurse	6-3	260	Jr.
DT	**Sirod Williams***	**6-0**	**295**	**Sr.**
	Josh Brent	6-2	315	Jr.
DT	Corey Liuget	6-3	290	So.
	Reggie Ellis	6-2	285	Fr.
DE	Antonio James	6-5	255	Sr.
	Whitney Mercilus	6-3	255	Fr.
LB	**Martez Wilson***	**6-4**	**240**	**Jr.**
	Evan Frierson	6-2	225	Fr.
LB	Ian Thomas	6-0	225	So.
	Justin Staples	6-4	225	Fr.
LB	Russell Ellington	6-2	225	So.
	Nate Bussey	6-2	220	Jr.
CB	**Travon Bellamy***	**6-0**	**205**	**Jr.**
	Tavon Wilson	6-0	195	So.
CB	**Dere Hicks***	**5-10**	**175**	**Sr.**
	Miami Thomas	5-11	175	So.
SS	Garrett Edwards	6-2	210	Jr.
	Supo Sanni	6-3	215	So.
FS	Bo Flowers	6-2	215	Jr.
	Donsay Hardeman*	**6-2**	**210**	**Sr.**

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Matt Eller***	**6-2**	**210**	**So.**
P	**Anthony Santella***	**6-2**	**190**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	vs. Missouri (St. Louis)
Sept. 12	ILLINOIS STATE
Sept. 26	at Ohio State
Oct. 3	PENN STATE
Oct. 10	MICHIGAN STATE
Oct. 17	at Indiana
Oct. 24	at Purdue
Oct. 31	MICHIGAN
Nov. 7	at Minnesota
Nov. 14	NORTHWESTERN
Nov. 27	at Cincinnati
Dec. 5	FRESNO STATE

2008 Results

(5-7, 3-5)

L	vs Missouri (St. Louis)	42-52
W	EASTERN ILLINOIS	47-21
W	LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE	20-17
L	at Penn State	24-38
W	at Michigan	45-20
L	MINNESOTA	20-27
W	INDIANA	55-13
L	at Wisconsin	17-27
W	IOWA	27-24
L	at Western Michigan	17-23
L	OHIO STATE	20-30
L	at Northwestern	10-27

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	28.7	40
Rushing	169.5	38
Passing	269.3	20
Total	438.8	19
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	26.6	67
Rushing	152.9	77
Passing	197.4	49
Total	350.3	56
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 6	- 0.50	89

WISCONSIN BADGERS

NATIONAL RANK 29

Big Ten rank: 5 | Record: 7-6 | Big Ten record: 3-5 (T-6th) | Stadium: Camp Randall (80,321)

Badgers in A Box

COACH: Bret Bielema — At Wisconsin and overall: 28-11, 3 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Paul Chryst
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dave Doeren
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1999
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2001
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 6 offense, 5 defense, punter, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: TB John Clay, LT Gabe Carimi, C John Moffitt, WR Nick Toon, TE Garrett Graham, DE J.J. Watt, DE O'Brien Schofield, CB Aaron Henry
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Badgers should be able to move the ball more efficiently with better quarterback play. Consistency is the operative word, especially for a young corps of receivers. Philip Welch and Brad Nortman are a bonus on special teams.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: There is inexperience on defense, particularly with the front seven. There's little or no depth behind the starters at linebacker. The return and coverage teams have to be positives, not negatives.

OFFENSE

Despite leading the Big Ten in rushing, the Badgers still had trouble overcoming their turnovers and instability at quarterback, resulting in a 1-3 record against Top 25 opponents.

Dustin Sherer, the senior incumbent, went 4-3 as the starter after replacing Allan Evridge.

Redshirt freshman Curt Phillips will push Sherer, and might even take over.

Coach Bret Bielema has not ruled out the possibility of rotating quarterbacks. Sherer offers more game experience, while Phillips is the more gifted athlete.

Despite the departure of tailback P.J. Hill, the school's No. 3 career rusher, there are few concerns about a tailback rotation of John Clay, Zach Brown and Erik Smith. Clay is a bulldozer; Brown is reliable; and Smith is the quickest of the bunch.

There should be plenty of daylight behind a line anchored by left tackle Gabe Carimi and center John Moffitt.

David Gilreath, Nick Toon, Isaac Anderson and Kyle Jefferson should all vastly improve the receiving unit with their physical growth and maturity. Gilreath paced the wideouts with 31 receptions, and watch for him on end-arounds. He rushed for 168 yards against Indiana.

The tight ends are all about quantity and quality: Garrett Graham (the leading returning receiver), Lance Kendricks, Mickey Turner and Jake Byrne.

DEFENSE

The Badgers look to make up for poor communication and sometimes poor tackling at critical junctures a year ago, particularly in the red zone where they ranked 11th in the Big Ten.

Up front, they may be lacking experience, but not numbers.

Senior catalyst O'Brien Schofield can have an impact as a pass rusher, especially if J.J. Watt, Brendan Kelly or Louis Nzegwu can apply pressure from the other edge.

But can Jeff Stehle, Patrick Butrym and Dan Moore hold up physically? Bielema is excited about Watt, a transfer from Central Michigan, who can move inside against spread offenses.

The starting linebackers are serviceable with Jaevery McFadden, the team's leading tackler, Culmer St. Jean and Blake Sorensen.

The safeties are all battle-tested. Jay Valai, Aubrey Pleasant, Chris Maragos and Shane Carter are interchangeable and under pressure to upgrade their production.

The return of cornerback Aaron Henry, who sat out last season after ACL surgery, should be a bonus. The other corner, Niles Brinkley, led the secondary with four interceptions.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Philip Welch, a redshirt freshman placekicker, and Brad Nortman, a true freshman punter, were both relative unknowns last season. Both delivered.

Welch converted on 20 of 24 field goals. He was 9 of 11 outside the 40, topped by a 52-yarder.

Nortman averaged 41.8 yards per punt.

OVERVIEW

With four straight home games to open the season, including the Big Ten opener against Michigan State, the Badgers should build some early momentum. If the quarterbacks don't self-destruct, the offense should be among the leaders again in the Big Ten.

But will the Badgers score consistently enough against their stronger opponents to compensate for a suspect defense? It could be a crossroads season for coach Bret Bielema, who went 17-1 in his first 18 games, but is 11-10 since.

JOHN CLAY

Photo by David Stuka

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Dustin Sherer***	**6-4**	**217**	**Sr.**
	Curt Phillips	6-3	215	Fr.
RB	John Clay	6-2	247	So.
	Zach Brown	5-11	208	Jr.
RB	Dex Jones	6-1	245	Fr.
	Sam Spitz	6-1	245	Fr.
WR	**David Gilreath***	**5-11**	**162**	**Jr.**
	Isaac Anderson*	**5-11**	**180**	**Jr.**
WR	Nick Toon	6-3	207	So.
	Kyle Jefferson	6-5	180	Jr.
TE	**Garrett Graham***	**6-4**	**248**	**Sr.**
	Lance Kendricks	6-4	237	Jr.
LT	**Gabe Carimi***	**6-8**	**313**	**Jr.**
	Ricky Wagner	6-7	308	Fr.
LG	Jake Bscherer	6-7	310	Jr.
	Jake Current	6-4	290	So.
C	**John Moffitt***	**6-4**	**313**	**Jr.**
	Joe Schafer	6-5	307	Fr.
RG	Bill Nagy	6-4	307	Jr.
	Kevin Zeitler	6-4	301	Fr.
RT	Josh Oglesby	6-7	329	So.
	Peter Konz	6-6	298	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**O'Brien Schofield***	**6-3**	**242**	**Sr.**
	Brendan Kelly	6-6	240	Fr.
DT	Patrick Butrym	6-4	280	So.
	Dan Cascone	6-3	296	Sr.
DT	Jeff Stehle	6-6	291	Sr.
	Dan Moore	6-2	278	Sr.
DE	J.J. Watt	6-6	285	So.
	Louis Nzegwu	6-3	240	So.
LB	**Jaevery McFadden***	**6-3**	**226**	**Sr.**
	Tony Megna	6-0	202	So.
LB	Culmer St. Jean	6-1	235	Jr.
	Leonard Hubbard	6-1	233	Fr.
LB	Blake Sorensen	6-1	230	Jr.
	Kevin Rouse	6-0	229	So.
CB	Aaron Henry	6-0	197	So.
	Antonio Fenelus	5-10	186	So.
CB	**Niles Brinkley***	**5-10**	**180**	**Jr.**
	Devin Smith	5-11	187	So.
SS	**Jay Valai***	**5-9**	**200**	**Jr.**
	Aubrey Pleasant	6-1	196	Sr.
FS	**Chris Maragos***	**6-0**	**198**	**Sr.**
	Shane Carter	6-2	202	Sr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Philip Welch***	**6-3**	**200**	**So.**
P	**Brad Nortman***	**6-3**	**214**	**So.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 12	FRESNO STATE
Sept. 19	WOFFORD
Sept. 26	MICHIGAN STATE
Oct. 3	at Minnesota
Oct. 10	at Ohio State
Oct. 17	IOWA
Oct. 31	PURDUE
Nov. 7	at Indiana
Nov. 14	MICHIGAN
Nov. 21	at Northwestern
Dec. 5	at Hawaii

2008 Results

(7-6,3-5)

W	AKRON	38-17
W	MARSHALL	51-14
W	at Fresno State	13-10
L	at Michigan	25-27
L	OHIO STATE	17-20
L	PENN STATE	7-48
L	at Iowa	16-38
W	ILLINOIS	27-17
L	at Michigan State	24-25
W	at Indiana	55-20
W	MINNESOTA	35-32
W	CAL POLY (OT)	36-35
	Champs Sports Bowl	
L	vs. Florida State	13-42

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.5	47
Rushing	211.2	14
Passing	188.1	84
Total	399.2	37
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	26.5	66
Rushing	133.3	44
Passing	195.8	44
Total	329.1	37
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 8	- 0.62	97

IOWA HAWKEYES

NATIONAL RANK 32

Big Ten rank: 6 | Record: 9-4 | Big Ten record: 5-3 (T-4th) | Stadium: Kinnick Stadium (70,585)

Hawkeyes in A Box

COACH: Kirk Ferentz – At Iowa: 70-53, 10 years; overall: 82-74, 13 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ken O'Keefe
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Norm Parker
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2004, co-champions
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 6 offense, 8 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Ricky Stanzi, RB Jewel Hampton, WR Derrell Johnson-Koulianos, DE Adrian Clayborn, DE Christian Ballard, LB A.J. Edds, LB Pat Angerer, CB Amari Spievey
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The defense might be as good as it was in 2008, which was one of Parker's best in his 11 seasons at Iowa. Stanzi is poised to make the move from "game manager" to "game changer."
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Hawkeyes will need to replace all the things that made them a Big Ten contender last season. Four-year starting DTs Mitch King and Matt Kroul are gone. Center Rob Bruggeman and guard Seth Olsen graduated from the offensive line. RB Shonn Greene left a year early after a record-setting 1,850 yards and 20 TDs.

OFFENSE

With running back Shonn Greene off to the NFL a year early, sophomore Jewel Hampton and freshman Jeff Brinson are on the clock.

Hampton, in spot duty behind Greene last season, had one of the best seasons ever for a true freshman running back at Iowa, rushing for 463 yards and a freshman record seven touchdowns. He averaged 5.1 yards per carry.

Brinson redshirted last season, but could fit that big-back model that worked so well in 2008 for the Hawkeyes.

Derrell Johnson-Koulianos led the Hawkeyes in receiving for the second consecutive season. The junior has 82 receptions for 1,121 yards in his first two seasons. Iowa's receptions record (157) and receiving yardage record (2,271) are in reach.

Trey Stross caught 13 passes last season. Injuries have marred his career, but he goes into '09 as the No. 2. Converted quarterback Marvin McNutt could give the position a shot of size and athleticism.

Quarterback Ricky Stanzi saw just about everything he needed to see in 13 games as a first-year starter last season. He conducted a game-winning drive against then-No. 3 Penn State.

When he didn't turn the ball over — he had eight in Iowa's three Big Ten losses — the Hawkeyes won. But without Green and offensive linemen Seth Olsen and center Rob Bruggeman, Stanzi will have to evolve into more of a playmaker.

DEFENSE

Linebacker should be the strength of Iowa's defense.

Middle linebacker Pat Angerer suffered through numerous injuries and mono during his 2007 sophomore season. He had just one tackle in four games. Angerer led the Hawkeyes in tackles a year ago with 107, plus he picked off five passes.

Senior A.J. Edds continued his steady-to-stellar play as the Iowa linebacker who throws a wrench into the "linebacker can't cover a wide receiver" argument. Junior Jeremiha Hunter went from No. 2 behind Jeff Tarpinian to second-leading tackler with 80 stops.

In the secondary, three starters return from a group that helped tie the school record with 23 interceptions. Eleven of those interceptions came from defensive backs who return in 2009 — cornerback Amari Spievey, free safety Brett Greenwood and strong safety Tyler Sash.

Spievey was the surprise of the season on defense. The junior was a second-team All-Big Ten pick. He had four interceptions and tied for third on the team with 68 tackles.

The Hawkeyes lost the 95 starts of Mitch King and Matt Kroul at defensive tackle, so experience on the inside is the big headache. Developing bodies is the key for this unit. Karl Klug and Mike Daniels are the frontrunners.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Iowa now has two scholarship kickers in sophomore Trent Mossbrucker and junior Daniel Murray. Between the two, the Hawkeyes should find one.

Mossbrucker was 13 of 15 before a certain 31-yarder against Penn State in the final seconds on a windy, dreary day. Coach Kirk Ferentz seeking a stronger leg, sent in Murray, who won the game. It's been his job since.

OVERVIEW

Iowa will need to build its foundation — the interior of the offensive and defensive lines. If the Hawkeyes can stop the run and run the ball near the levels they did last season, they'll be in the mix for a January Big Ten bowl. Their season depends on how they handle five nasty road games.

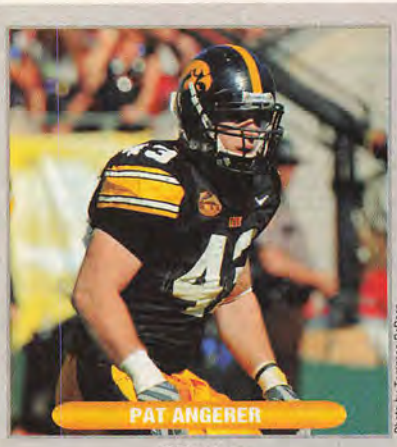

PAT ANGERER

Photo by Tomasso DeRosa

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Ricky Stanzi***	**6-4**	**218**	**Jr.**
	James Vandenberg	6-3	205	Fr.
RB	Jewel Hampton	5-9	210	So.
	Jeff Brinson	5-11	215	Fr.
FB	**Brett Morse***	**6-3**	**238**	**Jr.**
	Wade Leppert	6-0	245	So.
WR	**Derrell Johnson-Koulianos***	**6-1**	**200**	**Jr.**
	Colin Sandeman	6-1	200	Jr.
WR	Trey Stross	6-4	200	Sr.
	Marvin McNutt	6-4	215	So.
TE	Tony Moeaki	6-4	250	Sr.
	Allen Reisner	6-3	235	Jr.
LT	**Bryan Bulaga***	**6-6**	**312**	**Jr.**
	Markus Zusevics	6-5	278	So.
LG	**Julian Vandervelde***	**6-3**	**300**	**Jr.**
	Andy Kuempel	6-7	300	Sr.
C	Rafael Eubanks	6-3	280	Sr.
	Josh Koeppel	6-2	267	Jr.
RG	Dan Doering	6-6	300	Sr.
	Dace Richardson	6-6	305	Sr.
RT	**Kyle Calloway***	**6-7**	**315**	**Sr.**
	Riley Reiff	6-6	280	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Adrian Clayborn***	**6-3**	**282**	**Jr.**
	Lebron Daniel	6-2	250	So.
DT	Karl Klug	6-4	258	Jr.
	Travis Meade	6-0	285	Sr.
DT	Mike Daniels	6-1	267	So.
	Steve Bigach	6-3	270	Fr.
DE	**Christian Ballard***	**6-5**	**285**	**Jr.**
	Broderick Binns	6-2	255	So.
LB	**Pat Angerer***	**6-1**	**235**	**Sr.**
	Jacody Coleman	6-3	240	Jr.
LB	**Jeremiha Hunter***	**6-2**	**235**	**Jr.**
	Jeff Tarpinian	6-3	233	Jr.
LB	**A.J. Edds***	**6-4**	**244**	**Sr.**
	Tyler Nielsen	6-4	232	So.
CB	Shaun Prater	5-11	175	So.
	Jordan Bernstine	5-11	205	Jr.
CB	**Amari Spievey***	**6-0**	**190**	**Jr.**
	William Lowe	5-10	170	So.
SS	**Tyler Sash***	**6-1**	**210**	**So.**
	David Cato	5-11	205	So.
FS	**Brett Greenwood***	**6-0**	**200**	**Jr.**
	Jack Swanson	5-11	195	Fr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Daniel Murray***	**5-10**	**185**	**Jr.**
P	**Ryan Donahue***	**6-3**	**180**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	NORTHERN IOWA
Sept. 12	at Iowa State
Sept. 19	ARIZONA
Sept. 26	at Penn State
Oct. 3	ARKANSAS STATE
Oct. 10	MICHIGAN
Oct. 17	at Wisconsin
Oct. 24	at Michigan State
Oct. 31	INDIANA
Nov. 7	NORTHWESTERN
Nov. 14	at Ohio State
Nov. 21	MINNESOTA

2008 Results

	(9-4, 5-3)	
W	MAINE	46-3
W	FLA INTERNATIONAL	42-0
W	IOWA STATE	17-5
L	at Pittsburgh	20-21
L	NORTHWESTERN	17-22
L	at Michigan State	13-16
W	at Indiana	45-9
W	WISCONSIN	38-16
L	at Illinois	24-27
W	PENN STATE	24-23
W	PURDUE	22-17
W	at Minnesota	55-0
	Outback Bowl	
W	vs SOUTH CAROLINA	31-10

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	30.3	33
Rushing	188.7	26
Passing	181.7	90
Total	370.4	53
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	13.0	5
Rushing	94.0	9
Passing	197.3	47
Total	291.3	12
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 8	+ 0.62	22

MICHIGAN WOLVERINES

NATIONAL RANK 47

Big Ten rank: 7 | Record: 3-9 | Big Ten record: 2-6 (T-9th) | Stadium: Michigan Stadium (107,501)

Wolverines in A Box

COACH: Rich Rodriguez — At Michigan: 3-9, 1 year; overall: 108-71-2, 17 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Calvin Magee
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Greg Robinson
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2004
LAST BOWL: 2007 season, Capital One
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 9 offense, 5 defense, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Tate Forcier, RB Brandon Minor, WR Greg Mathews, DE Brandon Graham, DT Mike Martin, LB Obi Ezeh, CB Donovan Warren
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Michigan's offense, after falling dormant last year, should emerge as a higher-scoring unit. The Wolverines return nearly every starter and have better depth across the board. Minor has All-Big Ten potential, and the offensive line, anchored by guard Stephen Schilling, will be much stronger.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The offensive uncertainty comes at quarterback, where true freshman Tate Forcier is expected to take over. New defensive coordinator Greg Robinson, the former Syracuse coach, will try to shore up a unit that allowed a school-record 347 points.

OFFENSE

Pick a stat, any stat from 2008, and it's likely the Wolverines were mired near the bottom of the conference rankings. Michigan's 20.3 points per game ranked last, as did its passing yards per game and total yardage.

But Michigan's spread offense — now in year two — should be better with a new starting quarterback, freshman Tate Forcier. Forcier, who completed better than 70 percent of his passes in high school, arrived in January and played impressively in the spring game.

Another freshman, speedy Denard Robinson, arrives in the summer. Both newcomers are well-suited to run the spread option offense.

Other than Forcier, the Wolverines return essentially all their starters. Among them is senior running back Brandon Minor, who led the Wolverines with 533 yards rushing. If Minor stays healthy, don't be surprised if he tops the 1,000-yard plateau.

If he does get injured, look for speedy veteran Carlos Brown to pick up the slack, and pint-sized freshman Vincent Smith to get a look, too.

At receiver, the team brings back starting wideouts Greg Mathews (35 catches) and Darryl Stonum (14), as well as dependable slot man Martavious Odoms (49).

Wideout Junior Hemingway and slot receiver Terrence Robinson return from illness and injury, respectively, and will add valuable depth.

DEFENSE

This is how things were supposed to work last season: A veteran defense would hold early season opponents in check until the team's young offense began to click. In reality, the offense never got going and the defense, well, it wasn't much better.

When the season ended, the Wolverines had been gutted for 40 or more points by four different teams. Michigan surrendered a school-record 347 points.

Hence the only coaching change of the offseason — Greg Robinson replaced first-year Michigan coordinator Scott Shafer.

While Robinson's tenure as head coach at Syracuse didn't earn much applause, his experiences as an NFL and college coordinator are noteworthy. Robinson coordinated the Denver Broncos' back-to-back Super Bowl-winning defenses, and also served as coordinator when Texas beat Michigan in the 2005 Rose Bowl.

Based on what was seen in the spring, Robinson's defense will alternate between three and four down linemen, with a mix of linebackers and secondary personnel, and one player — senior Stevie Brown — filling a hybrid linebacker/safety role.

The Wolverines also return cornerback Donovan Warren, inside linebacker Obi Ezeh (who led the team with 98 tackles), outside linebacker Jonas Mouton and pass-rushing end Brandon Graham, who had 10 sacks a year ago.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Michigan never did solve its problems in the return game in '08, though many players tried. The biggest issue was sloppy ball handling. Likewise, the Wolverines had trouble with their kicker, who hit on just 10 of 15 field goal tries.

While questions remain in both of those areas, the Wolverines know they can rely on Zoltan Mesko who averaged nearly 43 yards per punt and earned first-team All-Big Ten honors.

OVERVIEW

Michigan's woeful performance in Rich Rodriguez's first year will be forgotten only if the Wolverines make major strides this season. Getting back to a bowl game seems like a reasonable goal for the program, which appears far more capable on offense and has added talent on both sides of the ball.

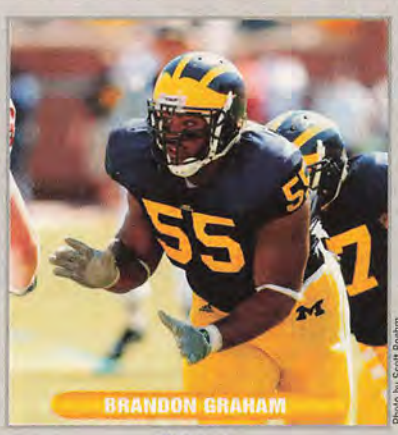

BRANDON GRAHAM

Photo by Scott Boehm

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Tate Forcier	6-1	187	Fr.
	Nick Sheridan	6-1	220	Jr.
RB	**Brandon Minor***	**6-1**	**216**	**Sr.**
	Carlos Brown	6-0	206	Sr.
WR	**Greg Mathews***	**6-3**	**209**	**Sr.**
	Junior Hemingway	6-1	226	So.
WR	**Martavious Odoms***	**5-9**	**171**	**So.**
	Terrence Robinson	5-9	173	Fr.
WR	**Darryl Stonum***	**6-2**	**188**	**So.**
	LaTerryal Savoy	6-3	213	Sr.
TE	**Kevin Koger***	**6-4**	**245**	**So.**
	Martell Webb	6-4	254	Jr.
LT	**Mark Ortmann***	**6-7**	**284**	**Sr.**
	Perry Dorrestein	6-7	310	Jr.
LG	**Stephen Schilling***	**6-5**	**304**	**Jr.**
	John Ferrara	6-4	280	Jr.
C	**David Molk***	**6-2**	**283**	**So.**
	Rocko Khoury	6-5	291	Fr.
RG	**David Moosman***	**6-5**	**292**	**Sr.**
	Ricky Barnum	6-2	280	Fr.
RT	Mark Huyge	6-6	291	So.
	Patrick Omameh	6-4	276	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Brandon Graham***	**6-2**	**268**	**Sr.**
	Greg Banks	6-4	275	Jr.
DT	Mike Martin	6-2	291	So.
	Vince Helmuth	6-1	299	Jr.
DT	Renaldo Sagesse	6-4	305	Jr.
	William Campbell	6-5	330	Fr.
DE	Ryan Van Bergen	6-6	261	So.
	Adam Patterson	6-3	263	Sr.
LB	**Jonas Mouton***	**6-2**	**218**	**Jr.**
	Marell Evans	6-3	237	Jr.
LB	**Obi Ezeh***	**6-2**	**240**	**Jr.**
	Brandon Herron	6-2	222	So.
LB	J.B. Fitzgerald	6-3	232	So.
	(LB/S) Stevie Brown*	**6-0**	**215**	**Sr.**
CB	**Donovan Warren***	**6-0**	**187**	**Jr.**
	J.T. Turner	6-2	185	Fr.
CB	Boubacar Cissoko	5-9	182	So.
	J.T. Floyd	6-0	184	Fr.
SS	Michael Williams	5-11	191	So.
	Brandon Smith	6-3	211	Fr.
FS	Troy Woolfolk	6-0	183	Jr.
	Jared Van Slyke	6-3	197	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Brendan Gibbons	6-0	215	Fr.
P	**Zoltan Mesko***	**6-5**	**238**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	WESTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 12	NOTRE DAME
Sept. 19	EASTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 26	INDIANA
Oct. 3	at Michigan State
Oct. 10	at Iowa
Oct. 17	DELAWARE STATE
Oct. 24	PENN STATE
Oct. 31	at Illinois
Nov. 7	PURDUE
Nov. 14	at Wisconsin
Nov. 21	OHIO STATE

2008 Results

(3-9, 2-6)

L	UTAH	23-25
W	MIAMI (OHIO)	16-6
L	at Notre Dame	17-35
W	WISCONSIN	27-25
L	ILLINOIS	20-45
L	TOLEDO	10-13
L	at Penn State	17-46
L	MICHIGAN STATE	21-35
L	at Purdue	42-48
W	at Minnesota	29-6
L	NORTHWESTERN	14-21
L	at Ohio State	7-42

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	20.3	99
Rushing	147.6	59
Passing	143.2	108
Total	290.8	109
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	28.9	84
Rushing	136.9	50
Passing	230.0	87
Total	366.9	67
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 10	- 0.83	104

NORTHWESTERN WILDCATS

NATIONAL RANK 51

Big Ten rank: 8 | Record: 9-4 | Big Ten record: 5-3 (T-4th) | Stadium: Ryan Field (47,130)

Wildcats in A Box

COACH: Pat Fitzgerald — At Northwestern and overall: 19-18, 3 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mick McCall
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Hankwitz
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2000
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 5 offense, 8 defense, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Mike Kafka, S Brad Phillips, S Brendan Smith, DE Corey Wootton
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Defense. Defense? Sure, folks will flock to Evanston expecting points aplenty from McCall's spread offense. But it's Wootton and the gang with the championship pedigree.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Fitzgerald hasn't found a sure fix at running back to replace Tyrell Sutton. Kafka is at risk of being overexposed. He's a good athlete, but there is some thought that he's best as a catalyst spot-starter. His options at wide receiver are all new to starting roles.

OFFENSE

Even with longtime starter C.J. Bacher out of the picture, there was no hand-wringing over who would inherit the quarterback job. Mike Kafka gives a natural ease to the transition from one senior to another. Kafka started as a redshirt freshman and has very good run-read instincts.

As for who lines up in the backfield with Kafka — that's where the uncertainty strikes.

Jeravin Matthews, Alex Daniel and Arby Fields, a freshman who arrives in August, are chasing junior Stephen Simmons entering fall camp.

Simmons is the best receiver of the group and has a knack for moving the chains. He runs behind his pads, yet he's also a tad green — 66 carries in two seasons — and isn't built in the prototype style at just 5-8, 175.

Daniel is one to watch. It looks more likely he'll be a niche back with short-yardage responsibility this season, but his rugged style will be endearing to a Big Ten coaching staff.

Matthews isn't behind, but his greatest asset is open-field wiggle, meaning his assignments could include the return game and some work at wideout.

Four starting linemen are back, and there are promising projects from the past two recruiting classes. The same cannot be said at wide receiver.

Kafka's running skills will be huge if the unproven receiver corps staggers in September. Senior Andrew Brewer (18 catches in '08) and sophomore Jeremy Ebert have shown potential, but the loss of three 100-career catch receivers leaves the 'Cats thin outside.

DEFENSE

Defensive end Corey Wootton gives coordinator Mike Hankwitz an All-Big Ten anchor to an experienced unit.

Wootton had 16 tackles for loss, including 10 sacks, as a junior. He was recovering from knee surgery in the spring, when two other D-line starters were also missing.

If everyone comes back on schedule, Hankwitz has the base for an improved defense that showed big strides a year ago, allowing 126.4 rushing yards per game. Vince Browne earned Freshman All-American notice on the other side.

The secondary, led by cornerback Sherrick McManis (67 tackles, two interceptions), returns intact. Rangy safety Brad Phillips (109 tackles) has All-Big Ten ability.

Perhaps the greatest improvement, despite the loss of Prince Kwateng, could be at linebacker, where formulating the exact order of the two-deep was a challenge for the first time in awhile at NU.

Outside linebacker Ben Johnson has played safety but showed he was starter material in spring drills. Nate Williams and Quentin Davie combined for 13 tackles for loss in '08.

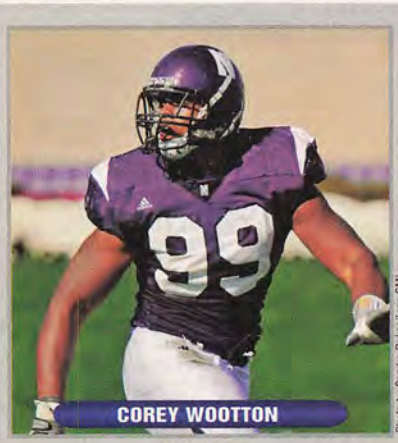
SPECIAL TEAMS

Prep All-American Jeff Budzien is likely to handle the kicking chores, but punter Stefan Demos, if pressed into a dual role, showed in the spring he can handle placement kicks and kickoffs. He had one punt blocked and averaged 39.0 yards on 64 punts last season.

Last season, Demos' kickoffs weren't great with four touchbacks in 46 kicks.

OVERVIEW

The Big Ten landscape appears to be a bit unpredictable in 2009, which is the best news the Northwesterns of the world could hear. Kafka didn't implode against Ohio State and Minnesota when pressed into action. If Pat Fitzgerald's defense can climb a rung or two on the toughness scale, they'll be peeking at a lower-tier bowl bid.



COREY WOOTTON

Photo by Sandra Dukes/Icon SMI

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Mike Kafka	6-3	215	Sr.
	Dan Persa	6-1	200	So.
RB	Stephen Simmons	5-8	175	Jr.
	Alex Daniel	6-0	195	Fr.
WR	Sidney Stewart	6-1	185	Jr.
	Demetrius Fields	6-0	200	Fr.
WR	Jeremy Ebert	6-0	180	So.
	Lee Coleman	5-10	180	Jr.
WR	Andrew Brewer	6-3	215	Sr.
	Kevin Frymire	6-1	180	Sr.
TE	**Josh Rooks***	**6-6**	**265**	**Jr.**
	Drake Dunsmore	6-3	230	So.
LT	**Al Netter***	**6-6**	**290**	**So.**
	Neal Deiters	6-8	315	Fr.
LG	Keegan Grant	6-2	295	Jr.
	Desmond Taylor	6-3	285	Sr.
C	**Ben Burkett***	**6-4**	**280**	**So.**
	Colin Armstrong	6-5	285	So.
RG	**Doug Bartels***	**6-4**	**285**	**So.**
	Mike Boyle	6-7	290	Jr.
RT	Kurt Mattes	6-6	295	Sr.
	Desmond Taylor*	**6-3**	**285**	**Sr.**

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Corey Wootton***	**6-7**	**265**	**Sr.**
	Quentin Williams	6-4	230	Fr.
DT	**Corbin Bryant***	**6-4**	**275**	**Jr.**
	Jack DiNardo	6-4	280	So.
DT	Adam Hahn	6-4	295	Sr.
	Marshall Thomas	6-3	290	Sr.
DE	Vince Browne	6-5	270	So.
	Kevin Watt	6-4	260	So.
LB	Ben Johnson	6-4	215	So.
	Aaron Nagel	6-1	225	So.
LB	**Nate Williams***	**6-2**	**225**	**Jr.**
	Chris Jeske	6-1	225	Sr.
LB	**Quentin Davie***	**6-4**	**225**	**Jr.**
	Bryce McNaul	6-4	225	So.
CB	**Jordan Mabin***	**5-11**	**180**	**So.**
	Justan Vaughn	6-0	190	Jr.
CB	**Sherrick McManis***	**6-1**	**190**	**Sr.**
	Mike Bolden	6-1	185	So.
SS	**Brad Phillips***	**6-4**	**210**	**Sr.**
	Brian Peters	6-4	210	So.
FS	**Brendan Smith***	**6-1**	**215**	**Sr.**
	David Arnold	6-1	220	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Jeff Budzien	5-10	150	Fr.
P	**Stefan Demos***	**5-10**	**190**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	TOWSON
Sept. 12	EASTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 19	at Syracuse
Sept. 26	MINNESOTA
Oct. 3	at Purdue
Oct. 10	MIAMI (OH)
Oct. 17	at Michigan State
Oct. 24	INDIANA
Oct. 31	PENN STATE
Nov. 7	at Iowa
Nov. 14	at Illinois
Nov. 21	WISCONSIN

2008 Results

	(9-4, 5-3)	
W	SYRACUSE	30-10
W	at Duke	24-20
W	SOUTHERN ILLINOIS	33-7
W	OHIO	16-8
W	at Iowa	22-17
L	MICHIGAN STATE	20-37
W	PURDUE	48-26
L	at Indiana	19-21
W	at Minnesota	24-17
L	OHIO STATE	10-45
W	at Michigan	21-14
W	ILLINOIS	27-10
	Alamo Bowl	
L	vs Missouri (OT)	23-30

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.4	74
Rushing	141.8	64
Passing	216.7	59
Total	358.5	61
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	20.2	26
Rushing	126.4	34
Passing	214.2	71
Total	340.5	49
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 3	- .23	73

MINNESOTA GOPHERS

NATIONAL RANK 56

Big Ten rank: 9 | Record: 7-6 | Big Ten record: 3-5 (T-6th) | Stadium: TCF Bank Stadium (50,000)

Gophers in A Box

COACH: Tim Brewster — At Minnesota and overall: 8-17, 2 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jedd Fisch
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Kevin Cosgrove, Ronnie Lee
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1967, co-champions
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 18; 10 offense, 8 defense
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Adam Weber, WR Eric Decker, RB DeLeon Eskridge, QB-WR MarQueis Gray, CB Traye Simmons, FS Kyle Theret, LB Lee Campbell, LB Simoni Lawrence
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Weber's presence means the offense is in great hands, and Decker should be an All-Big Ten player again. The Gophers want to attack more on defense to keep the turnover pendulum in their favor.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Generating a consistent push against Big Ten offensive linemen will be necessary for the defense to take a step forward. A similar thing can be said on the offensive side of the ball, where running backs need wider creases.

OFFENSE

Run to win. That was coach Tim Brewster's reminder to the Golden Gophers in the offseason, emphasizing the need for a strong rushing attack to complement the passing game that thrives on the Adam Weber-to-Eric Decker connection.

With a new coordinator, physicality has been a theme. How soon Minnesota sees the desired result isn't as certain.

Brewster handed the ball to DeLeon Eskridge more than anyone else last season. The freshman had 678 rushing yards and seven touchdowns, but Minnesota finished 104th in the nation in rushing.

Other than Eskridge and Weber, no other player had 50 carries. Redshirt freshman Kevin Whaley should be in the mix this season.

Brewster, a former college tight end, expects his offensive line to mature. All five starters return (Jeff Tow-Arnett hopes to be back from ACL surgery) but there won't be time for an in-season adjustment with a non-conference schedule that has a little bite, including a home game against Cal.

Weber was in the top 50 in the nation in total offense and Decker caught 84 passes for 1,074 yards with seven scores. Where will Weber look when Decker is blanketed?

Freshman quarterback MarQueis Gray gave the Gophers a jolt of excitement with a big spring game — 8 of 10 passing for 141 yards and two touchdowns. He has fans in a stir about the future, but his immediate role will be on gadget plays. He did work some as a receiver in the offseason.

Wide receiver Ben Kuznia caught 31 passes in 13 games last season and is the team's second-leading returning receiver. The biggest playmaker in spring drills was Troy Stoudermire, who scored on an end-around in the spring game and is the team's primary return man.

DEFENSE

Brewster's two recruiting classes are adding depth — and lots of speed.

Of the team's six captains, four are defensive players. Senior defensive tackles Eric Small and Garrett Brown are among them, as are the team's top playmakers, linebackers Simoni Lawrence and Lee Campbell.

Lawrence wasn't a full-time starter last season, but it was difficult for coaches to keep him off the field. He'll play snaps at rush end in obvious passing downs.

The secondary had only one vacancy to fill in spring practice — strong safety.

Free safety Kyle Theret and cornerbacks Traye Simmons and Marcus Sherels are returning starters. Theret had 78 tackles and three interceptions last season, and Simmons led the team with four picks.

The Gophers got off to a better start than expected last season because of their propensity for making plays and getting bounces. They forced 31 turnovers in 2008.

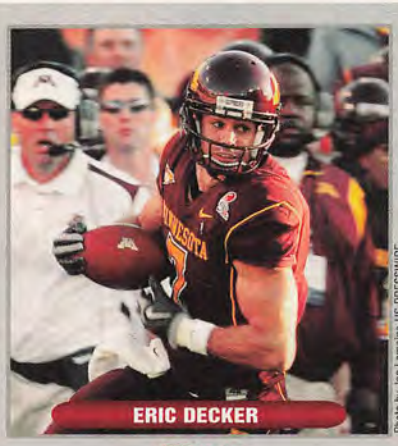
SPECIAL TEAMS

Eric Ellestad was a good placekicker in the spring, but doesn't bring a wow factor to kickoffs.

The return game should have the flash to make a big splash. Stoudermire and the team's other young receivers give Brewster options.

OVERVIEW

The bowl appearance might have been fool's gold for the Golden Gophers. Minnesota's offense has to be more balanced to compete in the Big Ten, especially with the Gophers ditching the indoor Metrodome for a new open-air facility. If they show ball control is possible, the Gophers will challenge for a repeat bowl bid.



ERIC DECKER

Photo by Jon Lemoine-US PRESSWIRE

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Adam Weber***	**6-3**	**217**	**Jr.**
	MarQueis Gray	6-4	215	Fr.
RB	**DeLeon Eskridge***	**5-11**	**190**	**So.**
	Kevin Whaley	5-9	179	Fr.
WR	**Ben Kuznia***	**6-0**	**192**	**Sr.**
	(FB) Jon Hoese	6-2	230	Jr.
WR	**Eric Decker***	**6-2**	**215**	**Sr.**
	Brandon Green*	**6-0**	**179**	**So.**
WR	Brodrick Smith	6-3	207	So.
	Da'Jon McKnight	6-3	200	So.
TE	Nick Tow-Arnett	6-2	247	Sr.
	Curtis Hughes	6-4	248	Jr.
LT	Matt Stommes	6-7	296	Sr.
	Ryan Ruckdashel	6-5	278	Sr.
LG	**Dominic Alford***	**6-3**	**332**	**Jr.**
	D.J. Burris*	**6-2**	**290**	**Jr.**
C	**Ryan Wynn***	**6-5**	**291**	**So.**
	Jeff Tow-Arnett*	**6-2**	**285**	**Sr.**
RG	Matt Carufel	6-5	303	Jr.
	Nedward Tavale*	**6-2**	**320**	**Sr.**
RT	Jeff Wills	6-7	375	Jr.
	Ryan Orton	6-4	292	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Anthony Jacobs	6-2	286	So.
	Derrick Onwuachi*	**6-5**	**253**	**Sr.**
DT	**Eric Small***	**6-2**	**295**	**Sr.**
	Jewhan Edwards	6-2	324	So.
DT	**Garrett Brown***	**6-2**	**310**	**Sr.**
	Brandon Kirksey	6-2	281	So.
DE	Cedric McKinley	6-5	262	Sr.
	Barrrett Moen	6-3	282	Sr.
LB	**Simoni Lawrence***	**6-1**	**218**	**Sr.**
	Keanon Cooper	6-0	206	Fr.
LB	**Lee Campbell***	**6-3**	**246**	**Sr.**
	Gary Tinsley	6-1	224	So.
LB	Nate Triplett	6-3	239	Sr.
	Spencer Reeves	6-2	221	Fr.
CB	**Traye Simmons***	**5-11**	**179**	**Sr.**
	Ryan Collado	5-9	176	Jr.
CB	**Marcus Sherels***	**5-11**	**165**	**Sr.**
	Johnny Johnson	5-9	180	So.
SS	Kim Royston	5-11	182	Jr.
	Mike Rallis	6-2	208	So.
FS	**Kyle Theret***	**5-10**	**186**	**Jr.**
	Tim Dandridge	6-1	181	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Eric Ellestad	6-2	200	Jr.
P	Blake Haudan	6-1	216	Sr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	at Syracuse
Sept. 12	AIR FORCE
Sept. 19	CALIFORNIA
Sept. 26	at Northwestern
Oct. 3	WISCONSIN
Oct. 10	PURDUE
Oct. 17	at Penn State
Oct. 24	at Ohio State
Oct. 31	MICHIGAN STATE
Nov. 7	ILLINOIS
Nov. 14	SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
Nov. 21	at Iowa

2008 Results

	(7-6, 3-5)	
W	NORTHERN ILLINOIS	31-27
W	at Bowling Green	42-17
W	MONTANA STATE	35-23
W	FLORIDA ATLANTIC	37-3
L	at Ohio State	21-34
W	INDIANA	16-7
W	at Illinois	27-20
W	at Purdue	17-6
L	NORTHWESTERN	17-24
L	MICHIGAN	6-29
L	at Wisconsin	32-35
L	IOWA	0-55
	Insight Bowl	
L	vs Kansas	21-42

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	23.2	83
Rushing	103.9	104
Passing	219.1	55
Total	322.9	91
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.8	61
Rushing	143.3	68
Passing	240.3	93
Total	383.6	80
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 12	+ 0.92	16

PURDUE BOILERMAKERS

NATIONAL RANK 68

Big Ten rank: 10 | Record: 4-8 | Big Ten record: 2-6 (T-9th) | Stadium: Ross-Ade (62,500)

Boilermakers in A Box

COACH: Danny Hope — At Purdue: 1st year; overall: 35-22, 5 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Gary Nord
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Donn Landholm
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2000, co-champions
LAST BOWL: 2007, Motor City
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 4 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Joey Elliott, RB Jaycen Taylor, WR Keith Smith, WR Aaron Valentin, LB Joe Holland, LB Chris Carlino, CB David Pender, FS Torri Williams
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: With seven returning starters, the defense should be solid, especially at linebacker and in the secondary. The offense has questions everywhere but along the line, where four starters return.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: With the loss of QB Curtis Painter, there's not much game experience at that position and, for the second year in a row, the Boilermakers lost their top wide receivers.

OFFENSE

First-year coach Danny Hope, taking over for Joe Tiller, inherits an offense that lost its starting quarterback, running back and top two wide receivers.

Curtis Painter, who started for most of the past four years, threw for 2,400 yards last season, and Kory Sheets ran for 1,131 yards. Greg Orton caught 69 passes for 720 yards and Desmond Tardy had 67 receptions for 876 yards.

The Boilermakers received another setback in the spring when sophomore quarterback Justin Siller was suspended from the university through the 2009-10 academic year for violating the school's academic policy.

Siller, who started two games last year when Painter was injured, figured to compete with fifth-year senior Joey Elliott for the starting job.

Elliott has been Painter's backup, playing in 10 games, but he has no career starts.

The situation at wide receiver is of major concern. Keith Smith and Aaron Valentin are the team's only experienced pass catchers.

Senior Jaycen Taylor, who shared time at running back with Sheets in 2006 and '07, is coming off knee surgery but is a proven talent. Kyle Adams, who also missed last season with a knee injury, is an all-around tight end who will be used heavily in the passing game.

Four starters return on the line — Zach Reckman, Zach Jones, Ken Plue and Eric Hedstrom. Plus, Jared Zwilling and Justin Pierce have extensive experience.

DEFENSE

With seven returning starters, the Boilermakers figure to rely on their defense early in the season. Tackle Mike Neal, end Ryan Kerrigan, some athletic linebackers and an experienced secondary lead the way.

The secondary consists of four seniors who had starting roles last year — Brandon King and David Pender at the corners, Torri Williams and Dwight Mclean at the safeties. Pender and King have started the past two seasons.

Kerrigan, a junior, is being touted as the next in a long line of outstanding ends at Purdue. Kerrigan finished with 56 tackles, including 11.5 for loss and seven sacks last season.

The development of the linebackers will be a key to the defense.

Joe Holland made the switch from safety last year as a redshirt freshman. Chris Carlino played in every game, starting five, as a true freshman. They both showed they are potential stars.

Jason Werner missed the season because of recurring back issues, but when healthy, he's the team's best linebacker and one of its top athletes.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Carson Wiggs and Chris Summers provide the Boilermakers with experience and talent in the kicking game.

Wiggs made 8 of 11 field goals — including a school-record 53-yarder on his first attempt — as a true freshman last season. Summers averaged 38.4 yards on 50 punts, including five touchbacks, 16 fair catches and 14 inside the 20-yard line.

OVERVIEW

While Hope plans to continue to use the spread offense that Tiller had so much success with, the lack of experience at quarterback and wide receiver could be difficult to overcome. The Boilermakers need some current unknowns to come through on offense, and they need the more-experienced defense to be solid. But no major change is expected from last season's 4-8 record.

RYAN KERRIGAN

Photo by Scott Boehm

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Joey Elliott	6-2	216	Sr.
	Caleb TerBush	6-5	222	Fr.
RB	Jaycen Taylor	5-10	180	Sr.
	Ralph Bolden	5-9	194	So.
WR	Aaron Valentin	6-1	205	Sr.
	Adam Wolf	5-11	204	Sr.
WR	Keith Smith	6-2	226	Jr.
	Waynelle Gravesande	6-0	182	So.
WR	Royce Adams	6-0	190	Sr.
	Tommie Thomas	6-2	193	Fr.
TE	Kyle Adams	6-4	251	Jr.
	Jeff Lindsay	6-3	238	Jr.
LT	Dennis Kelly	6-8	291	So.
	Peters Drey	6-6	292	Fr.
LG	**Zach Reckman***	**6-5**	**297**	**Sr.**
	Eric Hedstrom*	**6-5**	**292**	**Sr.**
C	Jared Zwilling	6-4	293	Sr.
	Andrew Brewer	6-3	297	Fr.
RG	**Ken Plue***	**6-7**	**322**	**So.**
	Justin Pierce	6-4	310	Jr.
RT	**Zach Jones***	**6-5**	**312**	**Sr.**
	Ryan Prater	6-5	286	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Gerald Gooden	6-3	235	So.
	Robert Maci	6-4	236	Fr.
DT	**Mike Neal***	**6-4**	**302**	**Sr.**
	Nick Mondek	6-5	283	So.
DT	Kawann Short	6-4	310	Fr.
	Monroe Brooks	6-6	290	Fr.
DE	**Ryan Kerrigan***	**6-4**	**263**	**Jr.**
	Nickcaro Golding	6-5	225	So.
LB	**Joe Holland***	**6-1**	**220**	**So.**
	DeVarro Greaves	6-2	216	So.
LB	**Chris Carlino***	**6-2**	**215**	**So.**
	John Humphrey	6-1	230	Jr.
LB	Jason Werner	6-4	221	Sr.
	Tyler Haston	6-2	228	Jr.
CB	**Brandon King***	**5-11**	**192**	**Sr.**
	Charlton Williams	6-2	200	So.
CB	**David Pender***	**6-1**	**175**	**Sr.**
	Kevin Green	5-10	192	So.
SS	Dwight Mclean	6-1	210	Sr.
	Josh McKinley	6-1	210	Jr.
FS	**Torri Williams***	**6-2**	**208**	**Sr.**
	Albert Evans	6-0	206	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Carson Wiggs***	**6-0**	**202**	**So.**
P	**Chris Summers***	**6-1**	**179**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	TOLEDO
Sept. 12	at Oregon
Sept. 19	NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 26	NOTRE DAME
Oct. 3	NORTHWESTERN
Oct. 10	at Minnesota
Oct. 17	OHIO STATE
Oct. 24	ILLINOIS
Oct. 31	at Wisconsin
Nov. 7	at Michigan
Nov. 14	MICHIGAN STATE
Nov. 21	at Indiana

2008 Results

(4-8, 2-6)

W	NORTHERN COLORADO	42-10
L	OREGON (2OT)	26-32
W	CENTRAL MICHIGAN	32-25
L	at Notre Dame	21-38
L	PENN STATE	6-20
L	at Ohio State	3-16
L	at Northwestern	26-48
L	MINNESOTA	6-17
W	MICHIGAN	48-42
L	at Michigan State	7-21
L	at Iowa	17-22
W	INDIANA	62-10

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.7	68
Rushing	124.8	85
Passing	249.6	29
Total	374.4	48
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	25.1	64
Rushing	174.8	93
Passing	183.3	24
Total	358.1	61
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 3	- 0.25	77

INDIANA HOOSIERS

NATIONAL RANK 73

Big Ten rank: 11 | Record: 3-9 | Big Ten record: 1-7 (11th) | Stadium: Memorial Stadium (49,225)

Hoosiers in A Box

COACH: Bill Lynch — At Indiana: 10-15, 2 years; overall: 91-82-3, 16 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Matt Canada
CO-DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Brian George, Joe Palcic
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1967, co-champions
LAST BOWL: 2007, Insight
RETURNING STARTERS: 17; 7 offense, 9 defense, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Ben Chappell, WR Terrance Turner, DE Jammie Kirlew, DE Greg Middleton, LB Matt Mayberry, SS Austin Thomas, FS Nick Polk
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Hoosiers have plenty of experience. Middleton and Kirlew could become the best pair of defensive ends in the Big Ten. IU has a talented starting group of LBs. Chappell could be on the verge of big things. Leadership appears to be much better than a year ago.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The dismissal of athletic all-around performer Kellen Lewis could be a major setback for the offense. The offensive line, which was dinged up with injuries last year, is still a concern, and questions remain in the secondary at cornerback.

OFFENSE

Indiana's offense will have a new look.

The Hoosiers' spread offense has been tweaked, with the coaching staff installing the Pistol — the running back lines up directly behind the quarterback in the shotgun formation.

The hope is that the new offense will enable the Hoosiers to become a more effective, downhill running team.

That will be even more important because two weeks following the spring game, senior Kellen Lewis, who had been moved from quarterback to receiver, was dismissed from the team. He was arguably IU's best all-around athlete and would have been dangerous running in open spaces.

The coaches believe junior Ben Chappell, who shared quarterback duties with Lewis last year, is ready to direct the team. It helps that there is talent and depth at running back.

Seniors Bryan Payton and Demetrius McCray, and promising redshirt freshman Darius Willis, are competing at running back. Peyton is a power runner, while McCray is more shake and bake. Coach Bill Lynch said, "Willis is going to be special."

Seniors Rodger Saffold and Pete Saxon, starters since their freshman seasons, lead the way on the line, and 6-8, 339-pound junior James Brewer appears ready to become a star.

There's plenty of talent at wide receiver with senior Terrance Turner and two wideouts who were impressive last year as true freshmen — Tandon Doss and Demarlo Belcher. Plus, Matt Ernest, the second-fastest guy on the team, had an outstanding spring.

DEFENSE

Indiana's 2008 defense allowed 35 points a game, but things have a chance to be better this season because of nine returning starters.

Injuries at tackle and to both starting safeties hurt last year, and end Greg Middleton fell off drastically from his 2007 All-American campaign.

If Middleton returns to form, and all indications are that he will, and Jammie Kirlew picks up at the other end where he left off last season, Indiana could have one of the best pair of ends in the country.

Indiana appears to be solid at linebacker, with the return of starters Matt Mayberry and Will Patterson, plus a promising youngster in Tyler Replogle. Mayberry, who was 10th in the Big Ten with 89 tackles a year ago, has the talent to be one of the Big Ten's elite linebackers.

Austin Thomas and Nick Polk should be recovered from knee injuries and provide IU with an outstanding pair of safeties. The successful spring move of Ray Fisher from wide receiver to cornerback should alleviate some of the concern at that position.

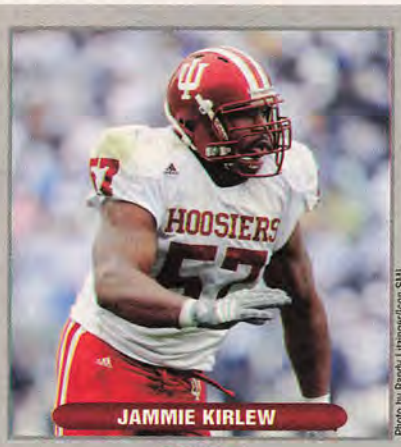
SPECIAL TEAMS

With the graduation of Austin Starr, the Hoosiers will be breaking in a new placekicker for the first time in three seasons. While IU has a trio of players ready to compete for the job, the favorite is incoming freshman Mitch Ewald, rated as one of the top five high school kickers nationally last year.

Sophomore punter Chris Hagerup returns after averaging 42.4 yards last season, third-best in the country for a freshman.

OVERVIEW

This is one of the most experienced Indiana teams in years. Chappell should provide a strong arm and good leadership at quarterback. Running the Pistol formation should improve the offense, particularly the running game. If the defense improves, the Hoosiers could make their second bowl game in three seasons.



JAMMIE KIRLEW

Photo by Randy Litzinger/Icon SMI

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Ben Chappell	6-3	235	Jr.
	Adam Follett	6-5	227	Fr.
RB	Bryan Payton	5-9	207	Sr.
	Demetrius McCray	5-11	200	Sr.
WR	**Terrance Turner***	**6-3**	**207**	**Jr.**
	Mitchell Evans	6-3	197	Jr.
WR	Tandon Doss	6-3	197	So.
	Chris Banks	6-2	176	Sr.
WR	Damarlo Belcher	6-5	209	So.
	Matt Ernest	6-2	187	So.
TE	**Troy Wagner***	**6-5**	**271**	**Sr.**
	Max Dedmond	6-5	233	So.
LT	**Rodger Saffold***	**6-5**	**306**	**Sr.**
	Andrew McDonald	6-6	290	So.
LG	**Justin Pagan***	**6-5**	**311**	**So.**
	Mike Reiter	6-2	300	Sr.
C	Will Matte	6-2	284	Fr.
	Pete Saxon	6-6	303	Sr.
RG	**Pete Saxon***	**6-6**	**303**	**Sr.**
	Cody Faulkner*	**6-5**	**308**	**Jr.**
RT	**Mike Stark***	**6-**	**300**	**Jr.**
	James Brewer	6-8	339	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Greg Middleton***	**6-3**	**285**	**Sr.**
	Fred Jones	6-4	262	So.
DT	Mick Mentzer	6-4	308	Fr.
	Jarrod Smith	6-4	301	Jr.
DT	**Deonte Mack***	**6-3**	**286**	**Jr.**
	Nicholas Sliger	6-3	293	Fr.
DE	**Jammie Kirlew***	**6-3**	**263**	**Sr.**
	Eric Thomas	6-4	265	So.
LB	**Will Patterson***	**6-1**	**236**	**Sr.**
	Justin Carrington	6-0	223	Sr.
LB	**Matt Mayberry***	**6-4**	**244**	**Sr.**
	Ian Reeves	6-0	234	So.
LB	Tyler Replogle	6-2	231	Jr.
	Leon Beckum	5-11	221	So.
CB	**Ray Fisher***	**5-9**	**185**	**Sr.**
	Richard Council	6-1	201	Jr.
CB	Donnell Jones	5-10	210	So.
	Chris Adkins*	**6-1**	**186**	**So.**
SS	**Austin Thomas***	**6-2**	**221**	**Sr.**
	Jerimy Finch	6-1	223	Jr.
FS	**Nick Polk***	**6-0**	**225**	**Sr.**
	Chris Adkins	6-1	186	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Mitch Ewald	5-10	165	Fr.
P	**Chris Hagerup***	**6-5**	**201**	**So.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 3	EASTERN KENTUCKY
Sept. 12	WESTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 19	at Akron
Sept. 26	at Michigan
Oct. 3	OHIO STATE
Oct. 10	at Virginia
Oct. 17	ILLINOIS
Oct. 24	at Northwestern
Oct. 31	at Iowa
Nov. 7	WISCONSIN
Nov. 14	at Penn State
Nov. 21	PURDUE

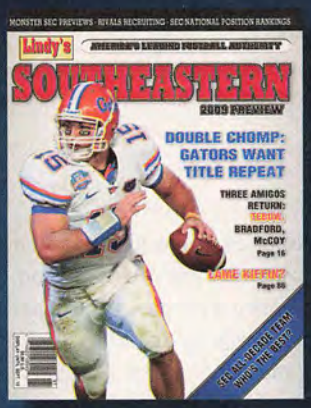
2008 Results

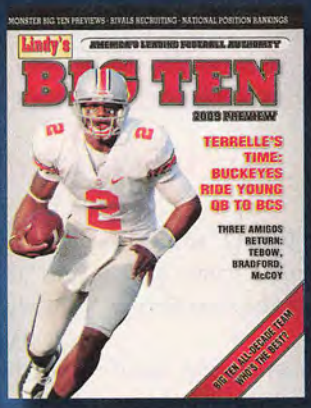
(3-9,1-7)

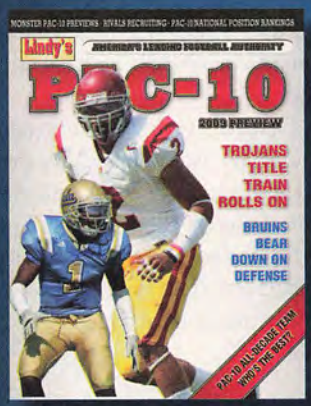
W	WESTERN KENTUCKY	31-13
W	MURRAY STATE	45-3
L	BALL STATE	20-42
L	MICHIGAN STATE	29-42
L	at Minnesota	7-16
L	IOWA	9-45
L	at Illinois	13-55
W	NORTHWESTERN	21-19
L	CENTRAL MICHIGAN	34-37
L	WISCONSIN	20-55
L	at Penn State	7-34
L	at Purdue	10-62

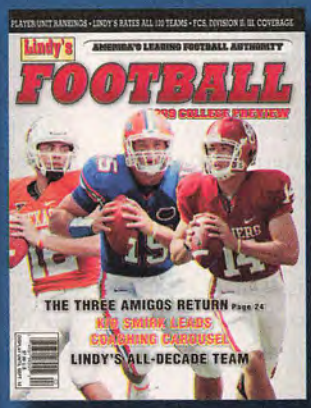
2008 Rankings

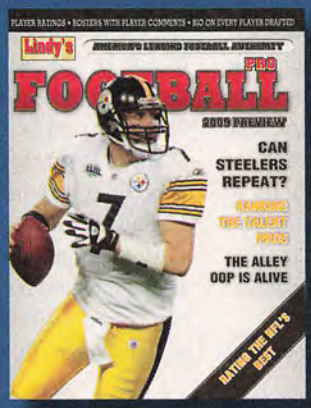
OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	20.5	97
Rushing	166.9	42
Passing	181.3	91
Total	348.2	71
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	35.3	108
Rushing	171.7	91
Passing	260.5	105
Total	432.2	107
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 1	+ 0.08	55

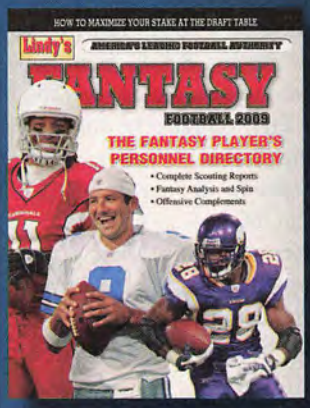


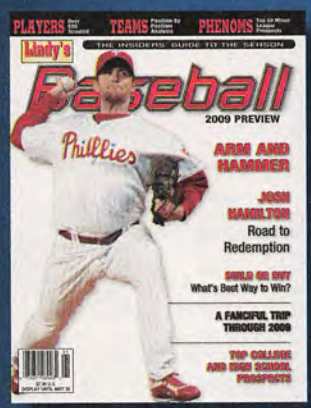


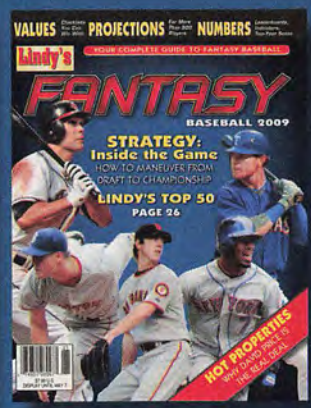












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It's The Big 12 South ... And Everybody Else

The always spicy Texas-Oklahoma football rivalry could pack some extra sizzle this season.

The two teams are — again — on the short list of national championship contenders. The fact Oklahoma played for the 2008 title is still a burr in the saddle of the Longhorns, given their part in a three-way tie for the Big 12 South title and Texas' head-to-head victory over the Sooners.

But tiebreakers are tiebreakers, and the league coaches voted in May to continue to use the BCS standings as one of the methods for settling ties between more than two teams. That criteria gave the Sooners the slightest of edges last season.

That's just part of the background as everything leads up to Oct. 17, when the Sooners and the Longhorns square off in Dallas in what could be a Red River Rivalry for the ages.

Sure, it's an always-intense game, but it could be off the charts this time because of what happened last season, because of the likely stakes this season, and because it will be the last meeting between two great quarterbacks — Sam Bradford of Oklahoma and Colt McCoy of Texas.

Those two record-setters headline the wealth of offensive talent in the Big 12 South.

All Bradford has done in his two seasons as Oklahoma's starter is lead the nation in passing efficiency as a freshman and win the Heisman Trophy as a sophomore. McCoy is destined to go down as one of the Longhorns' all-time greats ... and he already owns two wins over the Sooners.

Oklahoma needs to rebuild its offensive line and find some receivers to replace Juaquin Iglesias and others. But the Sooners appear loaded on defense, and coach Bob Stoops isn't downplaying Oklahoma's potential on that side of the ball.

"It has a chance to be a really good one, or one of our better ones," he said. "There's great experience, depth and ability up front. I always think that defense starts up front and makes the biggest impact with those front four guys. And the rest of the pieces have a chance to be really good."

Big 12 Conference Picks

Big 12 South	GOOD NEWS	BAD NEWS	OUR CALL
1. Texas	Quarterback Colt McCoy came back, as did much of the offense.	Still looking for someone to step up at running back to take pressure off McCoy.	In a race that is nearly too close to call, perhaps the math will tilt in UT's favor this season.
2. Oklahoma	Heisman winner Sam Bradford came back; defensive front might dominate.	Replacing four O-line starters and three of the top four receivers is a tall order.	Find some Texas-good blockers, and OU will play in its fifth national title game this decade.
3. Oklahoma St.	Cowboys have wow factor: Zac Robinson, Dez Bryant and Kendall Hunter.	Defense still has so much to prove to pull OSU even with South's elite.	If new D-coordinator Bill Young works some magic, Cowboys make it a three-horse race.
4. Texas Tech	QB Taylor Potts appears poised to take over where Graham Harrell left off.	Offensive departures get most attention, but defense lost key playmakers, too.	Mike Leach has shown ability to retool quickly and keep Red Raiders on winning track.
5. Baylor	QB Robert Griffin's skills will stress even the best defenses.	Loss of key performers creates big questions on both lines.	Griffin and overall team experience gives Baylor chance at first bowl since 1994.
6. Texas A&M	More competitive than last year, when Aggies went 0-5 against the South.	Dramatic improvement on defense — 114th nationally — is unrealistic.	Mike Sherman is still a couple of recruiting classes away; will everyone stay patient?
Big 12 North			
1. Kansas	QB Todd Reesing gives KU stability that other North contenders lack.	Losing all three starting LBs leaves Kansas with tackling questions.	Reesing's grittiness, and his supporting playmakers, boosts Jayhawks to North summit.
2. Nebraska	Strong finish last season puts Huskers in position to take next step.	Inexperience at QB and WR puts added pressure on the running game.	If defense improves as expected, Nebraska has a chance to move to top of the North.
3. Missouri	Above-average running game gives QB Blaine Gabbert time to develop.	No Big 12 team has to replace as much talent as do the Tigers.	A couple of understandable steps backward, but the Tigers are still respectable.
4. Colorado	Return of 10 starters give Buffs a chance to be much improved on offense.	Can Cody Hawkins or Tyler Hansen be productive Big 12 quarterbacks?	Ever-optimistic coach Dan Hawkins says Buffs capable of winning 10 games; we politely disagree.
5. Kansas State	Bill Snyder's return provides much-needed stability in Manhattan.	Even by North standards, Wildcats fall short of needed speed and athleticism.	How close is Snyder to being where he wants to be? "I can't see there from here," he said.
6. Iowa State	Iowa native Paul Rhoads excited to take over beleaguered program.	Don't expect sudden improvement from a defense that keeps springing leaks.	Wide-open offense should at least make losing exciting this season.

Lindy's 2009 ALL-BIG 12 Team

OFFENSE - First Team

QB	Sam Bradford	Jr.	Oklahoma
RB	DeMarco Murray	Jr.	Oklahoma
RB	Kendall Hunter	Jr.	Oklahoma St.
WR	Dez Bryant	Jr.	Oklahoma St.
WR	Dezmon Briscoe	Jr.	Kansas
TE	Jermaine Gresham	Sr.	Oklahoma
C	Chris Hall	Sr.	Texas
OL	Adam Ulatoski	Sr.	Texas
OL	Russell Okung	Sr.	Oklahoma St.
OL	Brandon Carter	Sr.	Texas Tech
OL	Trent Williams	Sr.	Oklahoma
K	Hunter Lawrence	Sr.	Texas
AP	Dez Bryant	Jr.	Oklahoma St.

DEFENSE - First Team

DL	Gerald McCoy	Jr.	Oklahoma
DL	Ndamukong Suh	Sr.	Nebraska
DL	Sergio Kindle	Sr.	Texas
DL	Colby Whitlock	Jr.	Texas Tech
LB	Sean Weatherspoon	Sr.	Missouri
LB	Travis Lewis	So.	Oklahoma
LB	Joe Pawelek	Sr.	Baylor
DB	Darrell Stuckey	Sr.	Kansas
DB	Perrish Cox	Sr.	Oklahoma St.
DB	Jordan Lake	Sr.	Baylor
DB	Earl Thomas	So.	Texas
P	Derek Epperson	Jr.	Baylor

OFFENSE - Second Team

QB	Colt McCoy	Sr.	Texas
RB	Chris Brown	Sr.	Oklahoma
RB	Derrick Washington	Jr.	Missouri
WR	Jordan Shipley	Sr.	Texas
WR	Brandon Banks	Sr.	Kansas State
TE	Riar Geer	Sr.	Colorado
C	Jacob Hickman	Sr.	Nebraska
OL	Kurtis Gregory	Sr.	Missouri
OL	Anthony Morgan	Jr.	Oklahoma St.
OL	Reggie Stephens	Sr.	Iowa State
OL	Elvis Fisher	So.	Missouri
AP	DeMarco Murray	Jr.	Oklahoma
K	Dan Bailey	Jr.	Oklahoma St.

DEFENSE - Second Team

DL	Jeremy Beal	Jr.	Oklahoma
DL	Lamarr Houston	Sr.	Texas
DL	Auston English	Sr.	Oklahoma
DL	Brandon Harold	So.	Kansas State
LB	Andre Sexton	Sr.	Oklahoma St.
LB	Keenan Clayton	Sr.	Oklahoma
LB	Roddrick Muckelroy	Sr.	Texas
DB	Jamar Wall	Sr.	Texas Tech
DB	Larry Asante	Sr.	Nebraska
DB	James Smith	Sr.	Iowa State
DB	Dominique Franks	Jr.	Oklahoma
P	Mike Brandtner	Sr.	Iowa State

Texas's pieces are plentiful as well.

But the Longhorns have holes to fill at wide receiver and on the defensive line, and they must find a way to get more production from the running game. Texas ranked 41st nationally in rushing last season, led by McCoy, not one of the tailbacks.

Oklahoma State appears poised to strike should either Texas or Oklahoma falter. The Cowboys are loaded with offensive stars — quarterback Zac Robinson, wide receiver Dez Bryant and running back Kendall Hunter.

Defense again figures to be a potential Achilles' heel, although the Cowboys are counting on new defensive coordinator Bill Young to make a difference.

Texas Tech must replace two of college football's most productive players in quarterback Graham Harrell and wide receiver Michael Crabtree, but coach Mike Leach has demonstrated it's best not to underestimate his ability to retool quickly.

Missouri, which has represented the North Division in the past two Big 12 title games, faces extensive rebuilding with the loss of quarterback Chase Daniel and plenty of other playmakers on both sides of the line of scrimmage. That leaves Kansas and Nebraska as the prime contenders for the division championship.

Give Kansas the edge there because of one notable advantage: Quarterback Todd Reesing, a proven performer and winner. Nebraska, meanwhile, figures to start the season with Zac Lee at the offensive controls. Lee has thrown two passes in his two seasons as a Husker.

"When you have a veteran QB that is proven, it means a lot to the whole football team," Kansas coach Mark Mangino said. "You know you've got a chance to make plays and score. When we haven't been in that position, it's been difficult."

In spite of that, Mangino is hesitant to proclaim his team as the division favorite.

"Look what speculation did to Wall Street," he said.

"It's nice people are saying that but we're not paying attention to that. We appreciate it that people think of us in that way. We're on solid ground as far as our program goes, but we need a lot of things to happen for us to win a championship."

— Steve Pivovar

Most Valuable Player

Colt McCoy
QB, Texas

Offensive Player of the Year

Sam Bradford
QB, Oklahoma

Defensive Player of the Year

Sergio Kindle
DE, Texas

Newcomer of the Year

Ronnell Lewis
LB, Oklahoma

HONOR ROLL

Most Accurate Passer	Colt McCoy	Texas
Strongest arm	Sam Bradford	Oklahoma
Best scrambler	Robert Griffin	Baylor
Coolest in the clutch	Colt McCoy	Texas
Toughest to bring down	Robert Griffin, QB	Baylor
Best hands	Jordan Shipley, WR	Texas
Most dangerous deep threat	Dez Bryant, WR	Oklahoma State
Best pass blocker	Trent Williams, OT	Oklahoma
Best run blocker	Russell Okung, OG	Oklahoma State
Best cover corner	Dominique Franks	Oklahoma
Best pass rusher	Sergio Kindle, DE	Texas
Special teams demon	DeMarco Murray	Oklahoma

The Big Ones

September 5	
Georgia at Oklahoma State	Cowboys get a shot at a much-needed marquee non-conference victory.
September 19	
Texas Tech at Texas	Not a bad game to kick off the league schedule.
Nebraska at Virginia Tech	A win in Blacksburg would be big boost in Bo Pelini's rebuilding project.
Kansas State at UCLA	Bill Snyder won't schedule many of these kind of games in the future.
October 1	
Colorado at West Virginia	Buffaloes head east in search of big-game Thursday night victory.
October 3	
Oklahoma at Miami	Once, this matchup would have captivated the nation. Still, it ain't bad.
Kansas St. vs. Iowa St. (Kan. City)	Winner could avoid landing in the Big 12 basement.
October 8	
Nebraska at Missouri	Huskers will be looking to snap a three-game losing skid in Columbia.
October 17	
Texas vs. Oklahoma (Dallas)	Could be the most coveted ticket in college football's regular season.
Texas Tech at Nebraska	Huskers almost pulled off big upset on the road last season.
October 24	
Oklahoma at Kansas	Jayhawks need to knock off a South power to enhance North title chances.
October 31	
Missouri at Colorado	A more prestigious minor bowl bid could hang in the balance.
Texas at Oklahoma State	Cowboys have plenty of firepower to test Longhorn defense.
Kansas at Texas Tech	Jayhawks' toughest Big 12 games are on the road.
November 7	
Oklahoma at Nebraska	Sooners embarrassed Huskers in Norman last season.
Kansas at Kansas State	National prestige not on the line, but it still matters in Sunflower State.
November 14	
Nebraska at Kansas	Winner should have inside track to the Big 12 title game.
November 21	
Kansas at Texas	Brutal stretch run could make or break Jayhawks' season.
Oklahoma at Texas Tech	Sooners ended Red Raiders' title hopes a year ago.
Baylor at Texas A&M	Could the Bears lock up a spot in the postseason with a win here?
November 26	
Texas at Texas A&M	Aggies could have a chance to play spoiler in this one.
November 27	
Nebraska at Colorado	Buffs outplayed Huskers in 2008 game, but still couldn't pull off the win.
November 28	
Oklahoma State at Oklahoma	Bedlam series game could carry high stakes.
Missouri vs. Kansas (Kan. City)	Tigers' miracle rally fell short last season.

JORDAN SHIPLEY

Photo by James D. Smith/Icon SMI

Bowl Connections

Champ BCS
(national title game if ranked #1 or #2, otherwise Fiesta)

Big 12 #2	Cotton vs. SEC
Big 12 #3	Holiday vs. Pac-10
Big 12 #4	Gator vs. ACC
Big 12 #5	Alamo vs. Big Ten
Big 12 #6	Sun vs. Pac-10*
Big 12 #7	Insight vs. Big Ten
Big 12 #8	Independence vs. SEC
Big 12 # 9	Texas Bowl vs. C-USA/Army

*If Gator does not select a Big 12 team

Top 10 NFL Talent

1.	Sam Bradford	QB	Jr.	Oklahoma	Waiting a season could put him at the top of the draft boards.
2.	Russell Okung	OT	Sr.	Oklahoma State	Pros love his combination of size and speed.
3.	Gerald McCoy	DT	Jr.	Oklahoma	Has chance to be the best defensive tackle in the draft.
4.	Dez Bryant	WR	Jr.	Oklahoma State	Big-play receiver ready to make impact at next level.
5.	Colt McCoy	QB	Sr.	Texas	Mixes off-the-chart intangibles with solid skill set.
6.	Ndamukong Suh	DT	Sr.	Nebraska	If Gerald McCoy isn't the best tackle prospect this guy is.
7.	Trent Williams	OT	Sr.	Oklahoma	Good feet, tremendous size ... and pros like left tackles.
8.	Jermaine Gresham	TE	Sr.	Oklahoma	Blocking ability and sure hands will draw plenty of attention.
9.	Sergio Kindle	DE	Sr.	Texas	Pass-rushing demon might go early in the first round.
10.	Sean Weatherspoon	LB	Sr.	Missouri	Big-play linebacker has big-time potential.

1. TEXAS: With the exception of Hoxie (Ark.) High defensive tackle Derek Johnson — who actually is a Texas native — the Longhorns didn't bother leaving the state in 2009. They had 19 in-state signings, including three of the state's top six (Garrett Gilbert, Alex Okafor and Mason Walters). The line of scrimmage was a clear emphasis, with 10 linemen signed.

2. OKLAHOMA: The class is loaded with playmakers, particularly on defense. Linebacker Ronnell Lewis has All-America potential despite an eight-man football background, and Tom Wort is a human wrecking ball. Jamarkus McFarland is one of the nation's best defensive linemen, and cornerback Marcus Trice is a huge playmaker in a small package.

3. TEXAS A&M: There are 28 signees, and at the top of the list is Christine Michael. The star running back provides some much-needed big-play ability on offense. The Aggies dipped into Louisiana for two of their top prospects in offensive lineman Patrick Lewis and linebacker Jonathan Stewart. They also picked up wide receiver Uzoma Nwachukwu and cornerback Steven Terrell out of one of Texas' top high school programs, Allen High.

4. NEBRASKA: Bo Pelini's first full recruiting cycle brought in some big-name players, starting with quarterback Cody Green, who threw for more than 3,000 yards and rushed for more than 1,500 as a senior. Almost as productive at running back was Rex Burkhead. Chris Williams was one of the nation's most productive linebackers, and Jason Ankrah comes in physically ready to compete from day one.

5. KANSAS: A great group of defensive backs highlights this class. The Jayhawks stayed in Big 12 country to land Euless (Texas) Trinity safety Prinz Kande and Arlington (Texas) Bowie safety Dexter Linton, but they were also able to land four-star safety Bradley McDougald from Ohio. On offense, four-star big back Toben Opurum joins a pro-style passer (Jordan Webb) and a dual-threat quarterback (Christian Matthews).

6. TEXAS TECH: Texas Tech took advantage of being in the national championship picture for much of last season and was able to land some real difference-makers. Running back Eric Stephens and wide receiver Eric Ward should be impact Big 12 players soon. Oklahoma product Pearlie Graves adds immediate depth on the defensive line, and Jacob Karam has a chance to add to the rich Texas Tech quarterback tradition.

7. OKLAHOMA STATE: Two versatile running backs top the class. One-time LSU commitment Dexter Pratt could be a tailback, H-back or linebacker, while Jeremy Smith is truly a do-everything back. Brandon Webb adds elite talent to the offense with the ability to play multiple positions along the line. Guard Anthony Morgan was one of the top junior college prospects in the nation, regardless of position, and should vie for a starting spot immediately.

8. MISSOURI: Start with five-star defensive tackle Sheldon Richardson, and you can see why Mizzou coaches are excited. The Tigers also landed Joshua Tatum, one of the nation's top junior college prospects. The offense should be in good hands with running back Kendial Lawrence, who rushed for nearly 2,700 yards as a senior and scored 43 touchdowns. Mizzou also signed two potential quarterbacks of the future in Blaine Dalton and Ashton Glaser.

9. COLORADO: Colorado followed up a fantastic 2008 class with some more high-profile players, starting with in-state defensive end Nick Kasa. With his size and speed off the edge, Kasa should provide an immediate impact. Another in-state signee is Jack Harris, a big offensive tackle who should be a force down the road. Along the defensive line, Edward Nuckols is a big bruiser out of California.

10. BAYLOR: Though it may be near the bottom of the Big 12, Baylor has put together what may be the sleeper class in the conference. Ivory Wade and Danny Watkins are highly recruited prospects who should immediately help on the offensive line. Bryce Petty, a last-minute pickup, has a good frame and tools to work with as he develops into a future quarterback. Josh Gordon may have as much upside as any wide receiver in Texas.

11. IOWA STATE: New coach Paul Rhoads did an admirable job of salvaging a solid class. If not for his status as a top baseball prospect, Princeton Jackson likely would've been a national recruit. Donnie Jennert is a big target at wide receiver with terrific hands, and James White is an all-purpose back who provides speed in the backfield.

12. KANSAS STATE: Bill Snyder hit the recruiting trail hard and found some gems in some diverse locations. Out of Louisiana, Snyder pulled safety Torell Miller and offensive tackle Cornelius Lucas. Defensive backs Courtney Thompson and Carlton Callender bring Florida speed to the Big 12. Texans Thomas Ferguson (safety) and John Hubert (running back) may be the prospects who make the biggest impacts of all.

TOP 20 INCOMING RECRUITS

RK	NAME	HT/WT	POS	HOMETOWN/SCHOOL	COLLEGE
1.	Sheldon Richardson	6-4/292	DT	St. Louis Gateway	Missouri
2.	Alex Okafor	6-4/232	DE	Pflugerville (Texas) High	Texas
3.	Garrett Gilbert	6-4/205	QB	Austin (Texas) Lake Travis	Texas
4.	Christine Michael	5-11/202	RB	Beaumont (Texas) West Brook	Texas A&M
5.	Mason Walters	6-6/290	OL	Wolfforth (Texas) Frenship	Texas
6.	Jamarkus McFarland	6-3/280	DT	Lufkin (Texas) High	Oklahoma
7.	Nick Kasa	6-7/245	DE	Broomfield (Colo.) Legacy	Colorado
8.	Gabe Lynn	6-0/185	DB	Jenks (Okla.) High	Oklahoma
9.	Ronnell Lewis	6-3/220	LB	Dewar (Okla.) High	Oklahoma
10.	Calvin Howell	6-4/280	DT	San Antonio Warren	Texas
11.	Garrett Porter	6-6/308	OL	Odessa (Texas) Permian	Texas
12.	Justin Chaisson	6-4/252	DE	Las Vegas Bishop Gorman	Oklahoma
13.	Kevin Brent	5-11/196	DB	Dallas South Oak Cliff	Oklahoma
14.	Anthony Morgan	6-4/325	OL	Corsicana (Texas) Navarro Junior College	Oklahoma State
15.	Chris Whaley	6-3/232	ATH	Madisonville (Texas) High	Texas
16.	Tom Wort	6-1/210	LB	New Braunfels (Texas) High	Oklahoma
17.	Dexter Pratt	6-2/227	ATH	Navasota (Texas) High	Oklahoma State
18.	Marcus Davis	6-0/192	DB	League City (Texas) Clear Creek	Texas
19.	Greg Timmons	6-2/191	WR	Aldine (Texas) Eisenhower	Texas
20.	Cody Green	6-4/220	QB	Dayton (Texas) High	Nebraska

TOP NEWCOMER:

Beaumont (Texas) West Brook running back Christine Michael is just what the doctor ordered for a Texas A&M offense that only topped the 30-point mark twice in 2008. Michael is a home-run threat and is physically developed enough to play immediately. He also has the work ethic and attitude to earn early touches.

TOP SLEEPER:

Despite rushing for more than 1,700 yards as a junior, running back Kendial Lawrence didn't get much early love from the Big 12. Even after nearly 2,700 yards on the ground as a senior, Lawrence's offers were coming in slower than expected. In the end, Missouri was fortunate to land this versatile back, who fits the Tigers' offense to perfection. Lawrence runs well out of the shotgun, catches the ball well out of the backfield and runs with great vision and feel.

LIKELY TO BE THE BEST NFL PLAYER:

As a defensive tackle, Sheldon Richardson has the tools to be a top-five pick in the NFL draft. He already has a good frame at 6-4 and close to 300 pounds, but he is athletic enough that some programs liked him as a tight end. With the speed to return kicks in high school and the frame to add more "good" weight, Richardson is the type of freakish athlete NFL scouts love.

NO. 1 SIGNING COUP:

The Jamarkus McFarland recruiting saga involved a tense three-way battle among heavyweights Texas, LSU and Oklahoma. In the end, the Sooners were able to steal the big defensive tackle away from his home-state school and from an LSU program near his hometown of Lufkin, Texas. Plus, an article in *The New York Times* emerged following his commitment that kicked some mud at Texas' recruitment of McFarland, adding insult to injury for the Longhorns.

BIGGEST MISS:

It is a rare occasion when one of the top players from Texas doesn't fall into the hands of one of the Big 12 powers, but the 2009 class saw two of the state's top four players head to LSU in cousins Russell Shepard and Craig Loston. Loston jetted for SEC country after committing to Texas A&M as a sophomore; Shepard committed to LSU early and never looked back.

BEST RECRUITING STAFF:

After missing out on some of the best players in the Longhorn State in 2008, Texas reclaimed the state in the Class of 2009. As always, the Texas staff was able to secure the bulk of its class early in the spring, led by Garrett Gilbert, the quarterback of the future. The staff also accomplished the goal of getting some depth at offensive line and on defense.

TEXAS LONGHORNS

NATIONAL RANK 2

Big 12 rank: 1 | Record: 12-1 | Big 12 record: 7-1 (T-1st, South) | Stadium: Darrell K. Royal-Texas Memorial (94,113)

Longhorns in A Box

COACH: Mack Brown — At Texas: 115-26, 11 years; overall: 201-100-1, 25 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Greg Davis
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Will Muschamp
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2005
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 1997
RETURNING STARTERS: 16, 6 offense, 8 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Colt McCoy, WR/KR Jordan Shipley, OT Adam Ulatoski, DE/LB Sergio Kindle, LB Roddrick Muckelroy, CB Chykie Brown, S Earl Thomas, C Chris Hall
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The offense will put points on the board. McCoy has a deep stable of receivers, a serviceable running game and an improved offensive line. The secondary can shut down opponents.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: If McCoy is lost to injury, the Longhorns' season will be lost. The defensive front drops off from last year when the Horns were No. 1 in the nation in sacks and had a stout rush defense. The secondary might only be as good as the pass rush.

OFFENSE

Colt McCoy led the Longhorns in rushing and completed an NCAA record 76.7 percent of his passes, finishing second in the Heisman voting. His production shouldn't change much.

He has an experienced receiving corps, led by Jordan Shipley. He has deep threats in Shipley, Malcolm Williams and Dan Buckner. He has a proven backup flanker in Brandon Collins. He has young receiving talent in redshirt freshman DeSean Hales.

Former quarterback John Chiles had a strong spring after switching to receiver and also will figure in the rotation.

Fozzie Whittaker, Vondrell McGee and a slimmed-down Cody Johnson are all capable backs, but not of the featured-back caliber. Whittaker must stay healthy; McGee must improve his blitz pickup; Johnson, listed at 255 pounds in spring, needs to keep his weight down.

Tre Newton, who redshirted last year, is the likely candidate to replace versatile Chris Ogbannaya as the team's third-down back.

The tight end position is unsettled. Greg Smith is a blocking tight end who lacks the receiving skills the position requires. Freshman D.J. Grant showed an ability in the spring to go deep, but lacks the bulk to be an every-down player.

The line returns four starters, and a fifth who started three games in '08. The unit is led by versatile center Chris Hall and left tackle Adam Ulatoski.

DEFENSE

The defensive line came out of spring practice only slightly more settled than when it went into it.

Linebacker Sergio Kindle, whose 10 sacks last year ranked only behind end Brian Orakpo's 11, moves into the NFL first-rounder's old spot on the line. In the spring, junior Sam Acho showed some of Orakpo's skills and should man the other spot.

Lamarr Houston is poised for a big season at tackle. The Longhorns have a solid run-stopper in Ben Alexander, whose pass rush skills must improve if he's to be an every-down player.

Kheeston Randall, Michael Wilcoxon and early-enrollee freshman Kyle Kriegel will battle it out for the spot opposite Houston. Roddrick Muckelroy is back on the weak side and is expected to be more consistent after flashes of dominance.

The secondary is solid, led by potential shutdown corners Chykie Brown and Aaron Williams.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Longhorns were third in the nation in net punting, a credit to their coverage unit and their tag-team punting tandem of John Gold and Justin Tucker. Both return, as does Trevor Gerland, out most of last season with an injury. Tucker will hold the job heading into the season.

Hunter Lawrence made 10 of 12 field goal attempts, including 4 of 5 longer than 40 yards.

Shipley had two momentum-changing touchdown returns last season — on a kickoff against Oklahoma and a punt against Texas Tech. His role as go-to receiver, coupled with the questions about his durability, means he probably isn't the full-time solution back deep.

Aaron Williams blocked four kicks last season.

OVERVIEW

McCoy and a strong offensive line will carry the Longhorns, and a new-look defensive front should hold up its end of the deal. The season will again boil down to one game — Oct. 17 against Oklahoma in Dallas. Well, make that two games, because if UT beats the Sooners again, it won't want to tempt tie-breaker fate by then losing at, say, Oklahoma State.

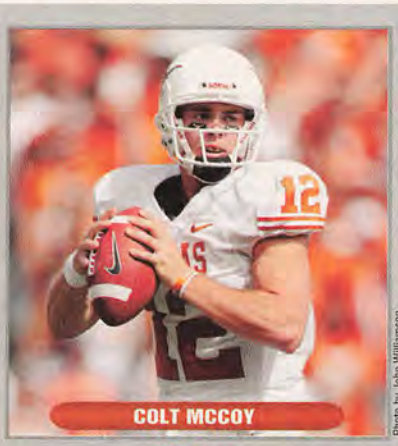

COLT MCCOY

Photo by John Williamson

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Colt McCoy***	**6-3**	**210**	**Sr.**
	Sherrod Harris	6-3	215	Jr.
RB	Vondrell McGee	5-10	205	Jr.
	Cody Johnson	5-11	255	So.
FB	Antwan Cobb	6-0	215	Jr.
	Aaron Smith	6-2	228	So.
WR	**Malcolm Williams***	**6-3**	**220**	**So.**
	Dan Buckner	6-4	215	So.
WR	Jordan Shipley	6-0	190	Sr.
	Brandon Collins	6-0	185	Jr.
TE	Greg Smith	6-4	267	Jr.
	Ahmard Howard	6-4	250	So.
RT	**Kyle Hix***	**6-7**	**320**	**Jr.**
	Britt Mitchell	6-5	305	Jr.
RG	Michael Huey	6-5	320	Jr.
	Mark Buchanan	6-6	300	Fr.
C	**Chris Hall***	**6-4**	**300**	**Sr.**
	David Snow	6-4	300	So.
LG	**Charlie Tanner***	**6-4**	**305**	**Sr.**
	Steve Moore	6-5	300	Jr.
LT	**Adam Ulatoski***	**6-8**	**306**	**Sr.**
	Tray Allen	6-5	315	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Sergio Kindle***	**6-4**	**255**	**Sr.**
	Dravannti Johnson	6-2	232	Fr.
DT	**Lamarr Houston***	**6-2**	**290**	**Sr.**
	Ben Alexander	6-0	310	Sr.
DT	Kheeston Randall	6-5	288	So.
	Michael Wilcoxon	6-3	285	So
DE	Sam Acho	6-3	258	Jr.
	Eddie Jones	6-3	260	Jr.
LB	Keenan Robinson	6-3	232	So.
	Tariq Allen	6-2	245	Fr.
LB	**Jared Norton***	**6-3**	**237**	**Sr.**
	Dustin Earnest	6-3	233	Jr.
LB	**Roddrick Muckelroy***	**6-2**	**235**	**Sr.**
	Emmanuel Acho	6-2	235	So.
CB	**Chykie Brown***	**6-1**	**187**	**Jr.**
	Curtis Brown	6-1	185	Jr.
CB	Aaron Williams	6-1	189	So.
	Deon Beasley*	**5-10**	**180**	**Jr.**
RS	**Earl Thomas***	**5-10**	**197**	**So.**
	Christian Scott	6-1	209	So.
LS	**Blake Gideon***	**6-1**	**200**	**So.**
	Nolan Brewster	6-2	210	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Hunter Lawrence***	**6-0**	**187**	**Sr.**
P	Justin Tucker	6-1	175	So.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	LOUISIANA-MONROE
Sept. 12	at Wyoming
Sept. 19	TEXAS TECH
Sept. 26	UTEP
Oct. 10	COLORADO
Oct. 17	vs. Oklahoma (Dallas)
Oct. 24	at Missouri
Oct. 31	at Oklahoma State
Nov. 7	UCF
Nov. 14	at Baylor
Nov. 21	KANSAS
Nov. 26	at Texas A&M

2008 Results

(12-1, 7-1)

W	FLORIDA ATLANTIC	52-10
W	at UTEP	42-13
W	RICE	52-10
W	ARKANSAS	52-10
W	at Colorado	38-14
W	vs. Oklahoma (Dallas)	45-35
W	MISSOURI	56-31
W	OKLAHOMA STATE	28-24
L	at Texas Tech	33-39
W	BAYLOR	45-21
W	at Kansas	35-7
W	TEXAS A&M	49-9
	Tostitos Fiesta Bowl	
W	vs. Ohio State	24-21

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	42.4	5
Rushing	167.5	41
Passing	308.3	7
Total	475.8	9
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	18.8	18
Rushing	83.5	3
Passing	259.4	104
Total	342.9	51
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 2	+ 0.15	49

OKLAHOMA SOONERS

NATIONAL RANK 3

Big 12 rank: 2 | Record: 12-2 | Big 12 record: 7-1 (T-1st, South) | Stadium: Gaylord Family - Oklahoma Memorial (82,112)

Sooners in A Box

COACH: Bob Stoops — At Oklahoma: 109-24, 10 years; overall: 109-24 overall, 10 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kevin Wilson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brent Venables
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2008
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 1998
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 5 offense, 9 defense, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Sam Bradford, WR Ryan Broyles, RB DeMarco Murray, RB Chris Brown, TE Jermaine Gresham, OT Trent Williams, DT Gerald McCoy, LB Travis Lewis
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Sooners have a Heisman Trophy winner at quarterback, an All-American at tight end, two 1,000-yard running backs and a defensive front seven that should be the envy of the Big 12 and most of the nation.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Who is going to block for all those offensive playmakers? The Sooners lost four starters on the offensive line. The defense returns nearly intact, but it's a defense that surrendered big plays and points in bundles last year.

OFFENSE

With Heisman Trophy winner Sam Bradford back at quarterback, the Sooners have a chance to be just as prolific as last season, when they became the third team in college football history to score more than 700 points.

Other than on the line, OU is loaded.

Tight end Jermaine Gresham opted to return for his senior season after reeling in 66 passes for 950 yards and 14 touchdowns last year. Gresham is a nightmare matchup because of his 6-6, 261-pound frame and soft hands.

He'll be one of Bradford's go-to receivers. The other will be Ryan Broyles, who will shift from the slot to wide receiver after setting numerous school freshman receiving records last season. Though he's only 5-11, Broyles has enough speed to blow past defenses and should see plenty of looks downfield. The rest of the receivers are promising, but unproven.

Chris Brown and DeMarco Murray — who both rushed for 1,000 yards last season — return at running back. Murray is coming off hamstring surgery, but should be 100 percent for fall camp. Brown, who has built his reputation as a tough runner, focused on improving his speed in the offseason.

But as talented as the skill players are, how well a revamped line jells could determine whether OU makes it back to the national title game.

Senior Trent Williams is the lone returning starter, and he'll swing from right to left tackle to protect Bradford's blindside.

Brian Simmons and Stephen Good are the guards, Ben Habern is the center and Cory Brandon will replace Williams at right tackle. Other than Williams, only Simmons has any significant playing experience.

DEFENSE

The Sooners return nine starters on a defense that was erratic at times last year, but closed the season strong by holding Texas Tech, Missouri and Florida — three of the nation's top-six scoring offenses — well below their season averages.

The unit will be led by tackle Gerald McCoy, a first-team All-Big 12 selection last season, and linebacker Travis Lewis, who broke Brian Bosworth's school record for tackles by a freshman.

The strength of the group, however, appears to be at end, thanks to the trio of Frank Alexander, Jeremy Beal and Auston English, who combined for 16 sacks last year.

The Sooners are solid at cornerback, with the return of starters Dominique Franks and Brian Jackson, though OU can't afford an injury to either due to depth issues.

The biggest question on defense is at safety, where OU will be unveiling two new full-time starters in Quinton Carter and Sam Proctor.

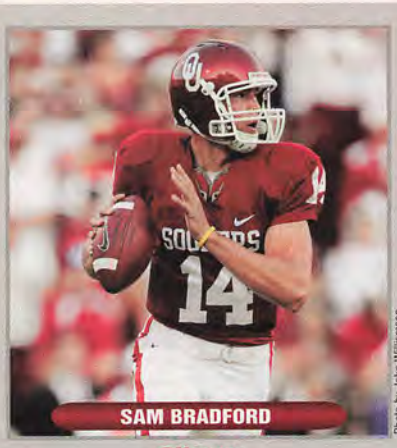
SPECIAL TEAMS

The Sooners were dreadful on special teams last year. Sophomore Jimmy Stevens is back at placekicker, but was erratic last year and made only one field goal longer than 40 yards. Freshman Tress Way takes over at punter, but needs to do better than his spring-game performance when he averaged 37 yards an attempt.

Above all, OU needs to shore up its kickoff coverage unit, which allowed a national-worst four touchdown returns last season.

OVERVIEW

Oklahoma should score a ton of points again, so whether the Sooners can emerge again out of the Big 12 South will depend on the defense. If OU's defense can limit big plays and eliminate collapses like the one that occurred against Texas last season, the Sooners could win a fourth-consecutive Big 12 title and return to the national title game.



SAM BRADFORD

Photo by John Williamson

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Sam Bradford***	**6-4**	**218**	**Jr.**
	Landry Jones	6-4	211	Fr.
RB	**DeMarco Murray***	**6-1**	**205**	**Jr.**
	Chris Brown	5-11	210	Sr.
WR	**Ryan Broyles***	**5-11**	**175**	**So.**
	Jameel Owens	6-3	200	So.
WR	Adron Tennell	6-4	191	Sr.
	Dejuan Miller	6-5	200	So.
WR	Mossis Madu	6-0	196	Jr.
	Brandon Caleb	6-2	196	Jr.
TE	**Jermaine Gresham***	**6-6**	**261**	**Sr.**
	Brody Eldridge	6-5	265	Sr.
LT	**Trent Williams***	**6-5**	**308**	**Sr.**
	Donald Stephenson	6-6	275	So.
LG	Brian Simmons	6-5	304	Sr.
	Tavaris Jeffries	6-5	320	Jr.
C	Ben Habern	6-4	275	Fr.
	Brian Lepak	6-4	285	Jr.
RG	Stephen Good	6-5	305	So.
	Alex Williams	6-6	300	So.
RT	Cory Brandon	6-7	308	Jr.
	Jarvis Jones	6-7	294	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Auston English***	**6-3**	**253**	**Sr.**
	Frank Alexander	6-4	249	So.
DT	**Gerald McCoy***	**6-4**	**295**	**Jr.**
	Stacy McGee	6-4	260	Fr.
DT	**Adrian Taylor***	**6-4**	**295**	**Jr.**
	DeMarcus Granger	6-2	302	Sr.
DE	**Jeremy Beal***	**6-3**	**253**	**Jr.**
	David King	6-4	240	Fr.
LB	**Keenan Clayton***	**6-2**	**220**	**Sr.**
	J.R. Bryant	6-3	230	Sr.
LB	**Ryan Reynolds***	**6-2**	**234**	**Sr.**
	Mike Balogun	6-2	250	Sr.
LB	**Travis Lewis***	**6-2**	**232**	**So.**
	Austin Box	6-2	221	So.
CB	**Dominique Franks***	**6-0**	**189**	**Jr.**
	Lamar Harris	6-2	180	Fr.
CB	**Brian Jackson***	**6-1**	**202**	**Sr.**
	Jonathan Nelson	5-11	177	Jr.
SS	Sam Proctor	6-0	208	So.
	Joseph Ibiloye	6-4	205	Fr.
FS	Quinton Carter	6-2	192	Jr.
	Desmond Jackson	5-11	198	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Jimmy Stevens***	**5-6**	**156**	**So.**
P	Tress Way	6-1	190	Fr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	vs. BYU (Arlington, TX)
Sept. 12	IDAHO STATE
Sept. 19	TULSA
Oct. 3	at Miami
Oct. 10	BAYLOR
Oct. 17	vs. Texas (Dallas)
Oct. 24	at Kansas
Oct. 31	KANSAS STATE
Nov. 7	at Nebraska
Nov. 14	TEXAS A&M
Nov. 21	at Texas Tech
Nov. 28	OKLAHOMA STATE

2008 Results

	(12-2, 7-1)	
W	CHATTANOOGA	57-2
W	CINCINNATI	52-26
W	at Washington	55-14
W	TCU	35-10
W	at Baylor	49-17
L	vs. Texas (Dallas)	35-45
W	KANSAS	45-31
W	at Kansas St.	58-35
W	NEBRASKA	62-28
W	at Texas A&M	66-28
W	TEXAS TECH	65-21
W	at Oklahoma State	61-41
	Big 12 Championship Game	
W	vs. Missouri	62-21
	BCS Championship Game	
L	vs. Florida	14-24

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	51.1	1
Rushing	198.5	20
Passing	349.4	3
Total	547.9	3
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.5	58
Rushing	116.2	20
Passing	251.5	99
Total	367.7	68
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 23	+ 1.64	1

OKLAHOMA STATE COWBOYS

NATIONAL RANK 10

Big 12 rank: 3 | Record: 9-4 | Big 12 record: 5-3 (4th, South) | Stadium: Boone Pickens Stadium (60,000)

Cowboys in A Box

COACH: Mike Gundy — At Oklahoma State and overall: 27-23, 4 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Gunter Brewer, Joe Wickline
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bill Young
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 8 offense, 6 defense, kicker
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1978, Big Eight, co-champions
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2005
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Zac Robinson, WR Dez Bryant, RB Kendall Hunter, OL Russell Okung, CB/RET Perrish Cox, LB Andre Sexton, LB Orie Lemon, LB Patrick Lavine
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Two years ago, OSU had exactly 3,161 yards rushing and passing. Last year's split was 3,191 rushing and 3,149 passing. Nobody has a more balanced attack. Robinson stirs the drink; Bryant will catch virtually anything thrown to his side of the field; Hunter has surreal moves and deceptive power.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Replacing three starters in the secondary could be problematic. The Cowboys haven't been an effective pass-rushing team in the past three years, and this season again could be troublesome. Who will be the second and third receiving options?

OFFENSE

Offense is king at Oklahoma State. The four most important players from the Cowboys' prolific 2008 offense are back.

Senior Zac Robinson completed 204 of 314 passes for 3,064 yards and 25 touchdowns. He also rushed for 562 yards and eight touchdowns. He added 12 pounds of muscle during the offseason after taking a beating in the regular-season finale against Oklahoma and the bowl loss to Oregon.

He's quick and slick at the zone read and creative on scrambles, although it's possible his involvement in the running game could drop off again in 2009.

Robinson's primary receiving target, junior Dez Bryant, is back after a phenomenal season in which he caught 87 passes for 1,480 yards and 19 touchdowns. He was, at times, unstoppable.

Bryant missed most of winter conditioning and all of spring practice because of a knee injury suffered in the Holiday Bowl. He expects to be 100 percent for an intriguing season opener against Georgia.

Kendall Hunter rushed for 1,555 yards as a sophomore, when he made several All-America lists.

Up front, All-Big 12 left tackle Russell Okung has made 34 consecutive starts, blossoming as a junior and helping clear the way for college football's most balanced offense. Okung is considered a potential first-round draft pick.

OSU will miss tight end Brandon Pettigrew, who graduated to the NFL, as well as a pair of three-year starters on the line. Still, there is enough experience up front to believe the Cowboys still have one of the game's best rushing attacks.

DEFENSE

New coordinator Bill Young has a kinder, simpler approach that players love. Young, trying to improve what has been a substandard defense for years, has to replace three starters in the secondary, and two more along the defensive line.

At least the linebacker corps — the strength of last year's defense — is back intact.

Orie Lemon started every game in the middle and made 90 tackles last season. Patrick Lavine has made 25 consecutive starts as the weakside linebacker. Andre Sexton led the team with 100 tackles last season, earning second-team All-Big 12 honors.

Perrish Cox is the only returning starter in the secondary. Cox is a two-year starter who last season finally came into his own at cornerback. Now a senior, he's projected as an NFL talent.

Senior Terrance Anderson should finally get his shot at the other corner after making plays throughout '08.

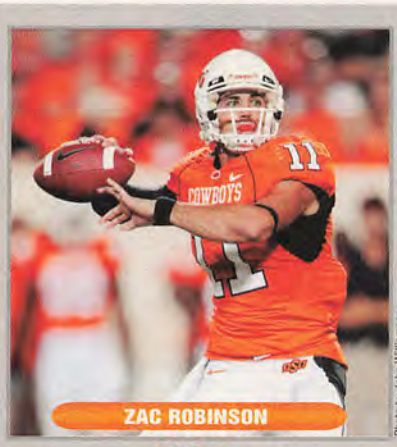
SPECIAL TEAMS

Perrish Cox has four career kick returns for touchdowns, setting Big 12 and OSU records. He ranked third nationally last season with a 29.83 kickoff return average. Bryant was third nationally with 17.94 yards per punt return.

Dan Bailey is back after hitting 15 of 19 field goal attempts. Redshirt freshman Quinn Sharp replaces Ray Guy Award winner Matt Fodge as punter.

OVERVIEW

If the Big Three (Robinson, Bryant, Hunter) stay healthy, the offense will be one of the nation's finest. New defensive coordinator Bill Young faces a difficult rebuild, but he did it at Kansas and has the resources to do it again at OSU. At worst, the Cowboys will be wildly entertaining. At best, they will be able to go point-for-point with South powers Texas and Oklahoma.



ZAC ROBINSON

Photo by John Williamson

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Zac Robinson***	**6-3**	**218**	**Sr.**
	Brandon Weeden	6-4	215	So.
RB	**Kendall Hunter***	**5-8**	**190**	**Jr.**
	Beau Johnson	5-10	210	So.
RB	Keith Toston	6-0	205	Sr.
	Kye Staley	5-11	225	Fr.
WR	**Dez Bryant***	**6-2**	**215**	**Jr.**
	Hubert Anyiam	6-1	198	So.
WR	**DeMarcus Conner***	**6-1**	**206**	**Sr.**
	Justin Blackmon	6-1	195	Fr.
TE	**Jamal Mosley***	**6-4**	**243**	**So.**
	Wilson Youman	6-5	252	So.
LT	**Russell Okung***	**6-6**	**305**	**Sr.**
	Andrew Mitchell	6-5	308	Sr.
LG	Noah Franklin	6-5	310	Sr.
	Nick Martinez	6-4	310	So.
C	**Andrew Lewis***	**6-5**	**290**	**Sr.**
	Grant Garner	6-4	286	So.
RG	Anthony Morgan	6-5	320	Jr.
	Jonathan Rush	6-5	309	So.
RT	**Brady Bond***	**6-7**	**295**	**Sr.**
	Andrew Mitchell	6-5	308	Sr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Ugo Chinasa***	**6-5**	**253**	**Jr.**
	Richetti Jones	6-3	253	So.
DT	**Derek Burton***	**6-3**	**285**	**Sr.**
	Shane Jarka	6-3	285	Jr.
DT	Swanson Miller	6-4	300	Sr.
	Nigel Nicholas	6-3	285	Fr.
DE	Jeremiah Price	6-2	260	Sr.
	Jamie Blatnick	6-3	252	So.
LB	**Andre Sexton***	**6-0**	**217**	**Sr.**
	James Thomas	6-0	205	So.
LB	**Orie Lemon***	**6-1**	**249**	**Sr.**
	Donald Booker	5-11	235	Sr.
LB	**Patrick Lavine***	**6-2**	**222**	**Sr.**
	Justin Gent	6-2	235	Jr.
CB	**Perrish Cox***	**6-0**	**195**	**Sr.**
	Maurice Gray	5-9	180	Sr.
CB	Terrance Anderson	5-11	185	Sr.
	Broderick Brown	5-8	180	Fr.
SS	Lucien Antoine	6-1	215	Sr.
	Victor Johnson	6-1	190	So.
FS	Johnny Thomas	6-0	195	So.
	Victor Johnson	6-1	190	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Dan Bailey***	**6-1**	**185**	**Jr.**
P	Quinn Sharp	6-1	177	Fr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	GEORGIA
Sept. 12	HOUSTON
Sept. 19	RICE
Sept. 26	GRAMBLING STATE
Oct. 10	at Texas A&M
Oct. 17	MISSOURI
Oct. 24	at Baylor
Oct. 31	TEXAS
Nov. 7	at Iowa State
Nov. 14	TEXAS TECH
Nov. 19	COLORADO
Nov. 28	at Oklahoma

2008 Results

	(9-4, 5-3)	
W	at Washington State	39-13
W	HOUSTON	56-37
W	MISSOURI STATE	57-13
W	TROY	55-24
W	TEXAS A&M	56-28
W	at Missouri	28-23
W	BAYLOR	34-6
L	at Texas	24-28
W	IOWA STATE	59-17
L	at Texas Tech	20-56
W	at Colorado	30-17
L	OKLAHOMA	41-61
	Holiday Bowl	
L	vs. Oregon	31-42

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	40.8	9
Rushing	245.5	8
Passing	242.2	38
Total	487.7	6
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	28.1	76
Rushing	137.8	52
Passing	267.7	109
Total	405.5	93
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 5	+ 0.38	35

KANSAS JAYHAWKS

NATIONAL RANK 21

Big 12 rank: 4 | Record: 8-5 | Big 12 record: 4-4 (3rd, North) | Stadium: Memorial Stadium (50,071)

Jayhawks in A Box

COACH: Mark Mangino — At Kansas and overall: 45-41, 7 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ed Warinner
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Clint Bowen
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1968, Big Eight co-champions
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2006
RETURNING STARTERS: 17; 8 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Todd Reesing, WR Dezmon Briscoe, WR Kerry Meier, RB Jake Sharp, S Darrell Stuckey, DE Jake Laptad
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: With Reesing making so many plays on the run and surrounded by more playmakers than at any time, the Jayhawks will be tough to keep out of the end zone. Briscoe, who missed most of spring football for violating team rules, has All-America potential.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The offensive line is young and inexperienced, a particular concern in the area of run-blocking. Also, the team lost three senior linebackers, and the best player at that position, Justin Springer, is coming off knee surgery. Can the line mount enough of a pass rush to help an average secondary?

OFFENSE

Three offensive linemen need to be replaced, but creative quarterback Todd Reesing is back for his final season, firing at sure-handed receivers. Scoring shouldn't be a problem.

Despite steady gains in recruiting under coach Mark Mangino, Kansas still doesn't quite match up on the lines with elite Big 12 South teams, which is why a quarterback who can make things happen on the run is a must. Reesing, blessed with remarkable pocket presence, knows just when to start scrambling and forever keeps his eyes downfield.

Dezmon Briscoe, second-team All-Big 12 as a sophomore when he caught 92 passes for 1,407 yards and 15 touchdowns, is Reesing's most talented receiver. The 6-3, 200-pound junior plays bigger than his size. His speed gets him behind some defenses, and he can make things happen after the catch.

Senior Kerry Meier (97 catches, 1,045 yards, eight touchdowns) has a real knack for getting open just past the first-down marker and is Reesing's favorite third-down target.

Running back Jake Sharp, who can really fly when he turns the corner, rushed for 12 touchdowns. His size keeps him from being an ideal fit in short-yardage situations, which is where freshman Toben Opurum could make himself valuable from day one.

Jeremiah Hatch, the team's best blocker, moves from tackle back to his natural position of center, while Jeff Spikes returns at right tackle. Quick-footed redshirt freshman Tanner Hawkinson, playing offensive line for the first time in his life, starts at left tackle.

Run-blocking could take a while to mesh, but Reesing knows how to fix broken plays.

DEFENSE

All three starting linebackers are gone, but only two must be replaced because the base defense will be a 4-2-5 alignment.

Increasing pressure from the edges is the key for success. Junior college recruit Quintin Woods will be counted on to help junior Jake Laptad in providing that from the end position. Woods originally signed with Michigan but didn't qualify academically and spent two years at Bakersfield College.

There is plenty of depth at tackle, though none of the players who rotate are all-conference-type talents.

The defense is shy on playmakers, though senior strong safety Darrell Stuckey, a first-team All-Big 12 pick, is the exception. He led the team with five interceptions and was second with 98 tackles.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Wide receiver Dezmon Briscoe returned kicks late in the season and averaged 27.4 yards on eight returns. Whether Mangino uses Briscoe regularly there is uncertain, but he'll always know he can turn to him.

Punter Alonso Rojas pinned 15 kicks inside the 20 and had just four touchbacks. Jacob Branstetter made all six field goals inside the 30, but his longest field goal was just 34 yards.

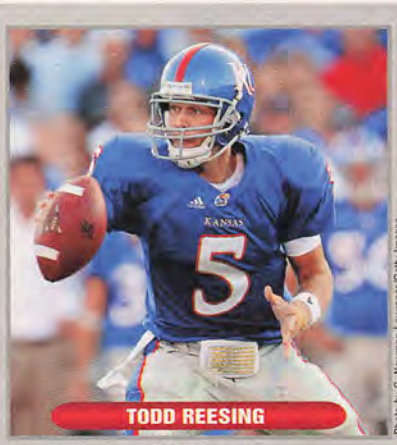
Daymond Patterson averaged 11 yards per punt return but needs to show improvement in his ability to catch punts cleanly on a consistent basis.

OVERVIEW

Over the past five seasons, Mangino is 7-3 against chief rivals Kansas State and Missouri, but one hurdle remains before Kansas truly arrives with the big boys of the Big 12: It has to win a game against one of the three South heavyweights.

Mangino is 0-9 against Oklahoma, Texas and Texas Tech, 45-32 in all other games.

Improvement from returning defensive linemen and quick learning from inexperienced offensive linemen will be key factors in determining whether that hurdle is cleared.



TODD REESING

Photo by G. Newman Lowrance/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Todd Reesing***	**5-11**	**200**	**Sr.**
	Kerry Meier	6-3	220	Sr.
RB	**Jake Sharp***	**5-10**	**195**	**Sr.**
	Toben Opurum	6-2	235	Fr.
WR	**Dezmon Briscoe***	**6-3**	**200**	**Jr.**
	Tertavian Ingram	6-0	200	Jr.
WR	**Kerry Meier***	**6-3**	**220**	**Sr.**
	A.J. Steward	6-4	229	So.
WR	**Johnathan Wilson***	**6-3**	**189**	**Jr.**
	Isiah Barfield	6-0	184	So.
TE	**Tim Biere***	**6-4**	**246**	**So.**
	Ted McNulty	6-5	226	So.
LT	Tanner Hawkinson	6-6	260	Fr.
	Jose Rodriguez	6-6	293	Sr.
LG	John Williams	6-4	338	Fr.
	Carl Wilson	6-4	292	Jr.
C	**Jeremiah Hatch***	**6-3**	**311**	**So.**
	Brad Thorson	6-3	290	Jr.
RG	Trevor Marrongelli	6-4	285	Fr.
	Sal Capra	6-3	292	Jr.
RT	**Jeff Spikes***	**6-6**	**314**	**So.**
	Ian Wolfe	6-5	295	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Jake Laptad***	**6-4**	**258**	**Jr.**
	Jeff Wheeler	6-7	260	Sr.
DT	**Caleb Blakesley***	**6-5**	**292**	**Sr.**
	Darius Parish	6-4	341	So.
DT	Richard Johnson	6-2	280	So.
	Jamal Greene*	**6-4**	**303**	**Jr.**
DE	Quintin Woods	6-5	230	Jr.
	Maxwell Onyegbule	6-5	257	Sr.
LB	Justin Springer	6-4	242	Jr.
	Jake Schermer	6-2	222	Sr.
LB	Arist Wright	6-0	226	Sr.
	Angus Quigley	6-2	226	Sr.
DB	Chris Harris	6-0	185	Jr.
	Calvin Rubles	6-3	200	Jr.
CB	**Daymond Patterson***	**5-9**	**175**	**So.**
	Ryan Murphy	5-10	176	So.
CB	**Justin Thornton***	**6-1**	**213**	**Sr.**
	Anthony Davis	6-0	192	So.
SS	**Darrell Stuckey***	**6-1**	**205**	**Sr.**
	Olaitan Oguntodu	6-0	220	Jr.
FS	**Phillip Strozier***	**6-0**	**200**	**Jr.**
	Prinze Kande	6-0	190	Fr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Jacob Branstetter***	**5-10**	**182**	**Jr.**
P	**Alonso Rojas***	**6-3**	**220**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	NORTHERN COLORADO
Sept. 12	at UTEP
Sept. 19	DUKE
Sept. 26	SOUTHERN MISS
Oct. 10	IOWA STATE
Oct. 17	at Colorado
Oct. 24	OKLAHOMA
Oct. 31	at Texas Tech
Nov. 7	at Kansas State
Nov. 14	NEBRASKA
Nov. 21	at Texas
Nov. 28	vs. Missouri (Kansas City)

2008 Results

	(8-5, 4-4)	
W	FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL	40-10
W	LOUISIANA TECH	29-0
L	at South Florida	34-37
W	SAM HOUSTON STATE	38-14
W	at Iowa State	35-33
W	COLORADO	30-14
L	at Oklahoma	31-45
L	TEXAS TECH	21-63
W	KANSAS STATE	52-21
L	at Nebraska	35-45
L	at Texas	7-35
W	at Missouri	40-37
	Insight Bowl	
W	vs. Minnesota	42-21

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	33.4	22
Rushing	126.8	83
Passing	305.6	8
Total	432.4	21

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	28.9	82
Rushing	123.1	28
Passing	273.6	114
Total	396.7	89

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+ 3	+ 0.23	45

NEBRASKA HUSKERS

NATIONAL RANK 22

Big 12 rank: 5 | Record: 9-4 | Big 12 record: 5-3 (T-1st, North) | Stadium: Memorial (73,918)

Huskers in A Box

COACH: Bo Pelini — At Nebraska and overall: 10-4, 1 year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Shawn Watson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Carl Pelini
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1999
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 11; 4 offense, 6 defense, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Zac Lee, RB Roy Helu Jr., TE Mike McNeil, C Jacob Hickman, DE Pierre Allen, NT Ndamukong Suh, CB Anthony West
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Suh is ringleader of a defense that should continue to improve under the guidance of the Pelini brothers. Helu and Quentin Castille are capable backs. Alex Henery is the most accurate kicker in school history, and his school-record 57-yard field goal beat Colorado last season.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Lee has thrown just two passes in his first two seasons, and his backups are more raw. The receiving corps lost two of the top performers in school history. The Huskers must restock the linebacker position.

OFFENSE

Zac Lee emerged from spring practice with the keys to the offense. He's thrown just two passes, completing one, in his first two seasons in the program.

That still makes Lee the team's most experienced quarterback following the graduation of Joe Ganz and the transfer of Patrick Witt. Ganz directed the Huskers to top 20 national rankings in scoring, passing and total offense.

Converted linebacker Latravis Washington, who was a high school quarterback, and true freshman Cody Green are the likely backups to Lee, who has a strong arm and good running ability. He is the son of former NFL quarterback Bob Lee.

Compounding the inexperience issue at quarterback is the loss of last season's two top receivers, Nate Swift and Todd Peterson. They combined for 125 catches for 1,727 yards and 14 touchdowns. Menelik Holt and Niles Paul have shown promise, but the rest of the receivers are young and inexperienced.

Nebraska's improving running game should provide a nice fallback should the passing game falter. Roy Helu and a slimmed-down Quentin Castille are a pair of proven producers at the I-back spot.

They will operate behind a line that returns three starters — center Jacob Hickman, left guard Keith Williams and left tackle Mike Smith.

DEFENSE

The Huskers were a mess defensively when Bo Pelini took over the program. A year later, Pelini sees signs the group could make a big impact.

"They have a better understanding of what we want," Pelini said. "It's more second nature. We're going to be more multiple. We'll be better against the no-huddle. I'm excited."

Nose tackle Ndamukong Suh is the poster boy for Nebraska's defensive improvement. He went from being a so-so performer as a sophomore to All-Big 12 as a junior. He was the first Nebraska interior defensive lineman to earn first team all-conference honors since 1999.

Nebraska has to replace five defensive starters, including two along a front that demonstrated dramatic improvement last season. The Huskers will benefit from the return of end Barry Turner, who missed most of last season with a broken leg.

Redshirt freshmen Sean Fisher and Will Compton have created a buzz at linebacker, where the Huskers must replace starters Cody Green and Tyler Wortmann.

The Huskers return four starters in the secondary. Larry Asante, Matt O'Hanlon and Rickey Thenarse provide Nebraska with plenty of experience at safety. Cornerback Anthony West started 11 games last season.

Defensive back Anthony Blue, a late-season starter in 2007, is back after missing last season because of a knee injury.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Alex Henery, the most accurate kicker in school history, will take on punting duties this season. The Huskers return kickoff return men Niles Paul and Alfonzo Dennard, but must find someone to return punts, as well as a long snap and hold.

OVERVIEW

The Huskers figure to have enough talent to challenge Kansas for Big 12 North honors but are a long way from being on an equal footing with the South Division's best teams.

Pelini put some bite back into the Blackshirt defense last season, but that unit will have to continue to improve to allow an inexperienced offense to get its bearings. Injuries at key spots could have a dramatic impact.

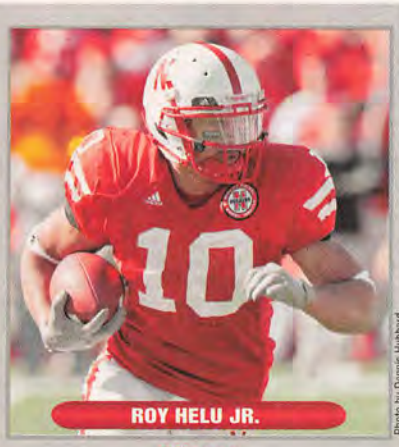

ROY HELU JR.

Photo by Dennis Hubbard

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Zac Lee	6-2	210	Jr.
	Latravis Washington	6-3	225	Jr.
RB	Roy Helu Jr.	6-0	215	Jr.
	Quentin Castille	6-1	235	Jr.
FB	Justin Makovica	6-1	230	Jr.
	Kevin Thomsen	6-2	235	So.
WR	Niles Paul	6-1	215	Jr.
	Chris Brooks	6-2	215	Sr.
WR	Menelik Holt	6-4	220	Sr.
	Antonio Bell	6-2	180	Fr.
TE	**Mike McNeill***	**6-4**	**240**	**Jr.**
	Dreu Young	6-4	245	Jr.
LT	**Mike Smith***	**6-6**	**290**	**Jr.**
	Brandon Thompson	6-6	300	Fr.
LG	**Keith Williams***	**6-5**	**320**	**Jr.**
	Andy Christensen	6-3	310	Sr.
C	**Jacob Hickman***	**6-4**	**295**	**Sr.**
	Mike Caputo	6-1	275	So.
RG	D.J. Jones	6-5	315	Jr.
	Ricky Henry	6-4	300	Jr.
RT	Marcel Jones	6-7	310	So.
	Derek Meyer	6-5	315	Sr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Pierre Allen***	**6-5**	**265**	**Jr.**
	Cameron Meredith	6-4	260	Fr.
NT	**Ndamukong Suh***	**6-4**	**300**	**Sr.**
	Terrence Moore	6-3	285	So.
DT	Jared Crick	6-6	285	So.
	Baker Steinkuhler	6-6	295	Fr.
DE	Barry Turner	6-3	265	Sr.
	Josh Williams	6-4	245	Fr.
LB	Mathew May	6-1	210	So.
	Alonzo Whaley	6-1	225	Fr.
LB	Colton Koehler	6-1	230	Sr.
	Will Compton	6-2	220	Fr.
LB	Sean Fisher	6-6	230	Fr.
	Blake Lawrence	6-3	220	Jr.
CB	Prince Amukamara	6-1	200	Jr.
	Anthony Blue	5-10	185	So.
CB	**Anthony West***	**6-0**	**205**	**Jr.**
	Alfonzo Dennard	5-10	190	So.
SS	**Larry Asante***	**6-1**	**215**	**Sr.**
	Eric Hagg*	**6-2**	**205**	**So.**
FS	**Matt O'Hanlon***	**5-11**	**200**	**Sr.**
	Rickey Thenarse	6-0	205	Sr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Alex Henery***	**6-2**	**175**	**Jr.**
P	Alex Henery	6-2	175	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	FLORIDA ATLANTIC
Sept. 12	ARKANSAS STATE
Sept. 19	at Virginia Tech
Sept. 26	LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE
Oct. 8	at Missouri
Oct. 17	TEXAS TECH
Oct. 24	IOWA STATE
Oct. 31	at Baylor
Nov. 7	OKLAHOMA
Nov. 14	at Kansas
Nov. 21	KANSAS STATE
Nov. 27	at Colorado

2008 Results

	(9-4, 5-3)	
W	WESTERN MICHIGAN	47-24
W	SAN JOSE STATE	35-12
W	NEW MEXICO STATE	38-7
L	VIRGINIA TECH	30-35
L	MISSOURI	17-52
L	at Texas Tech (OT)	31-37
W	at Iowa State	35-7
W	BAYLOR	32-20
L	at Oklahoma	28-62
W	KANSAOS	45-35
W	at Kansas State	56-28
W	COLORADO	40-31
	Gator Bowl	
W	vs. Clemson	26-21

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	35.4	17
Rushing	169.8	37
Passing	281.0	15
Total	450.8	12
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	28.5	80
Rushing	116.5	21
Passing	233.4	89
Total	349.9	55
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 11	- 0.85	107

TEXAS TECH RED RAIDERS

NATIONAL RANK 26

Big 12 rank: 6 | Record: 11-2 | Big 12 record: 7-1 (T-1st, South) | Stadium: Jones AT&T Stadium (53,882)

Red Raiders in A Box

COACH: Mike Leach — At Texas Tech and overall: 76-39, 9 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Leach
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ruffin McNeill
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1994, Southwest Conference co-champs
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 1999
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 5 offense, 7 defense, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Taylor Potts, WR Lyle Leong, WR Jacoby Franks, CB Jamar Wall, LB Brian Duncan
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The full-throttle offense shouldn't see a downshift even with the new personnel. Depth at wide receiver is reason enough for optimism in Potts' first season.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: With no pass rush and two star safeties to replace, the passing defense is in the crosshairs. The running back competition could be heated, but there's no clear picture entering fall camp.

OFFENSE

Texas Tech is the only team in the Big 12 South without a holdover starting quarterback. The Red Raiders lost Graham Harrell and a host of talented skill players, including No. 10 overall NFL draft pick Michael Crabtree.

Coach Mike Leach's reaction: Bring on the doubters.

Leach's maverick approach is part shtick and part proven success in just these kind of instances. Starting over at key positions hasn't slowed the offense in the past. Leach has always found a Kliff Kingsbury, B.J. Symons, Sonny Cumbie, Cody Hodges ... or Taylor Potts.

A three-year understudy to Harrell, Potts is the new kid on the block in Lubbock. And at 6-5 with a strong arm, he could be the perfect player for Leach's passing offense. He'll be the fifth new starter at quarterback since 2003.

With three starters gone from last year's line, which allowed just 13 sacks, a bump or two in the road is possible.

Tech has led the nation in passing in six of the past seven seasons. While Harrell accumulated 124 touchdowns, and Crabtree averaged more than 1.5 scores per game while at Tech, the Red Raiders aren't going to disappear.

Leach pointed to a true freshman, Eric Ward, as one candidate to help fill Crabtree's big shoes. Jacoby Franks is expected to put up solid numbers.

The team's most experienced receiver is Edward Britton, but his grades had him in the doghouse in the spring. Leach had him study at the 50-yard line of the Jones AT&T Stadium one day in March.

DEFENSE

The loss of two starting ends, including the conference's leader in sacks (Brandon Williams), and ball-magnet free safety Darcel McBath are arguably greater than those on offense.

McKinner Dixon, suspended in the spring, is the other potential loss at defensive end, though the door seemed to be left open a crack for him to return at some point.

Not allowing opposing quarterbacks time to plant and throw in the pocket has been a measured focus with the new-look defensive line. Tech averaged 2.6 sacks per game last season, when most teams were forced into comeback mode — and a hurry-up offense — to keep pace.

Former tackle Brandon Sesay is down about 15 pounds to make the switch to end. He has the agility and athleticism to become a pass rusher.

Junior linebacker Brian Duncan led the team with 95 tackles in 2008.

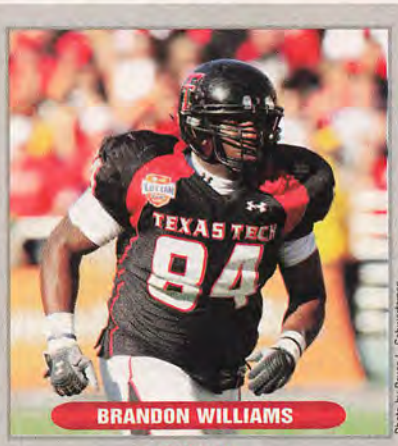
SPECIAL TEAMS

Jamar Wall, who played a big role as the kickoff returner in the second half of last season, will be kept in that spot. But punt returner Eric Morris must be replaced.

Donnie Carona made 4 of 9 field goal tries as a true freshman but didn't attempt a kick after Nov. 1. He was replaced by a walk-on, but could have a shot at the punting job in the fall.

OVERVIEW

A comedown from the most successful season in school history is more than likely. Leach was handed a five-year, $12.7 million contract in the offseason. When the loot stacks that high, there's no room for rebuilding seasons. Leach doesn't expect one, but the South could be the best division in football with Oklahoma, Oklahoma State and Texas challenging for BCS spots.



BRANDON WILLIAMS

Photo by Bruce L. Schwartzman

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Taylor Potts	6-5	215	Jr.
	Steven Sheffield	6-4	181	Jr.
RB	**Baron Batch***	**5-11**	**200**	**Jr.**
	Aaron Crawford	5-11	199	So.
WR	Tramain Swindall	6-3	175	So.
	Adam James	6-3	217	So.
WR	Lyle Leong	6-1	165	Jr.
	Edward Britton*	**6-0**	**174**	**Sr.**
WR	**Detron Lewis***	**6-0**	**209**	**Jr.**
	Austin Zouzalik	6-1	181	Fr.
WR	Jacoby Franks	6-1	194	So.
	Rashad Hawk	6-4	183	So.
LT	**Brandon Carter***	**6-7**	**340**	**Sr.**
	Terry McDaniel	6-7	323	Fr.
LG	Chris Olson	6-5	271	Jr.
	Lonnie Edwards	6-5	288	So.
C	Shawn Byrnes	6-4	295	Sr.
	Blake Emert	6-4	280	So.
RG	Mickey Okafor	6-7	320	So.
	Deveric Gallington	6-4	347	Fr.
RT	**Marlon Winn***	**6-6**	**325**	**Sr.**
	Joe King	6-6	324	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	McKinner Dixon	6-3	250	Sr.
	Sandy Riley	6-0	237	Sr.
DT	**Rajon Henley***	**6-3**	**266**	**Sr.**
	Richard Jones	6-1	272	Sr.
NT	**Colby Whitlock***	**6-2**	**281**	**Jr.**
	Chris Perry	6-3	308	So.
DE	Brandon Sharpe	6-3	244	Sr.
	Daniel Howard	6-3	239	Sr.
LB	**Bront Bird***	**6-3**	**220**	**Jr.**
	Tyrone Sonier	6-2	215	So.
LB	**Brian Duncan***	**6-1**	**238**	**Jr.**
	Sam Fehoko	5-11	236	So.
LB	**Marlon Williams***	**6-0**	**224**	**Sr.**
	Blake Collier	6-2	211	Jr.
CB	**Jamar Wall***	**5-10**	**195**	**Sr.**
	Brent Nickerson*	**6-0**	**195**	**Sr.**
CB	LaRon Moore	5-9	186	Jr.
	Taylor Charbonnet	5-10	168	So.
SS	Cody Davis	6-2	205	Fr.
	Jared Flannel	5-11	173	So.
FS	Franklin Mitchem	6-2	201	Jr.
	Brett Dewhurst	6-0	194	Jr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Matthew Williams***	**5-8**	**160**	**Jr.**
P	Donnie Carona	6-0	215	So.

*** Returning Starters in Bold**

2009 Schedule

Sept.5	NORTH DAKOTA
Sept.12	RICE
Sept. 19	at Texas
Sept. 26	at Houston
Oct. 3	NEW MEXICO
Oct. 10	KANSAS STATE
Oct. 17	at Nebraska
Oct. 24	TEXAS A&M
Oct. 31	KANSAS
Nov. 14	at Oklahoma State
Nov. 21	OKLAHOMA
Nov. 28	vs. Baylor (Arlington, TX)

2008 Results

	(11-2, 7-1)	
W	EASTERN WASHINGTON	49-24
W	at Nevada	35-19
W	SMU	43-7
W	MASSACHUSETTS	56-14
W	at Kansas State	58-28
W	NEBRASKA (OT)	37-31
W	at Texas A&M	43-25
W	at Kansas	63-21
W	TEXAS	39-33
W	OKLAHOMA STATE	56-20
L	at Oklahoma	21-65
W	BAYLOR	35-28
	Cotton Bowl	
L	vs. Mississippi	34-47

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	43.8	3
Rushing	117.9	94
Passing	413.2	1
Total	531.0	4
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	27.8	74
Rushing	140.4	61
Passing	242.2	94
Total	382.6	79
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 8	+ 0.62	22

MISSOURI TIGERS

NATIONAL RANK 46

Big 12 rank: 7 | Record: 10-4 | Big 12 Record: 5-3 (T-1st, North) | Stadium: Memorial Stadium/Faurot Field (68,349)

Tigers in A Box

COACH: Gary Pinkel — At Missouri: 59-41, 8 years; overall: 132-78-3, 18 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: David Yost
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dave Steckel
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1969, Big 8 co-champions
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2004
RETURNING STARTERS: 10; 5 offense, 4 defense, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Blaine Gabbert, TB Derrick Washington, WR Jared Perry, TE Andrew Jones, NT Jaron Baston, LB Sean Weatherspoon, CB Kevin Rutland, S Kenji Jackson
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Tigers have pieces in place to potentially keep things running offensively, especially on the ground with tailbacks Washington and De'Vion Moore. The pass rush should be better with a rotation of speedy defensive ends. Weatherspoon is one of the most productive LBs in the country.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The potential on offense hinges on several unproven players at receiver and, most notably, Gabbert, who saw spot duty as the No. 3 quarterback last year. The inexperience on defense could lead to growing pains. Replacing reliable kicker Jeff Wolfert might be a challenge.

OFFENSE

Sophomore quarterback Blaine Gabbert began and ended spring practices as the favorite to replace Chase Daniel, holding off walk-on Jimmy Costello and early-enrolled freshmen Blaine Dalton and Ashton Glaser.

The 6-5, 235-pound Gabbert is blessed with NFL size, skills and arm strength, but more important to MU coaches will be his accuracy and ability to manage the shotgun, no-huddle attack.

The spring came and went without Gary Pinkel naming Gabbert the starter for the season, but he's clearly ahead of the pack.

Missouri threw the ball on nearly 60 percent of last year's snaps, but new coordinator David Yost expects a more balanced approach this fall, especially now that tailback Derrick Washington is healthy after playing with a torn meniscus most of last season.

With returning senior receivers Jared Perry (shoulder) and Danario Alexander (knee) sidelined for the spring's live-contact drills and scrimmages, a trio of sophomores emerged as playmaking options — Wes Kemp, Jerrell Jackson and Brandon Gerau, a wispy walk-on whose steady production during the spring earned him a scholarship beginning this fall.

All three took turns as Gabbert's favorite target during the spring and could replenish the depth created by losses of All-Americans Jeremy Maclin and Chase Coffman.

DEFENSE

Just four starters return on a defense that was run ragged last season, but the biggest change comes along the sideline.

The group now belongs to new coordinator Dave Steckel, Pinkel's grizzled linebackers coach who brings discipline and emotion to a defense that played with neither at times last year.

The most promising development for Steckel's defense came along the line, particularly at end.

With only one starting defensive lineman from last season still on the team, nose tackle Jaron Baston and a fleet of pass-rushers surfaced during the spring, including last year's junior college transfer Brian Coulter.

Jacquies Smith was voted the team's most improved D-lineman, and redshirt freshman Aldon Smith was arguably the line's most electric playmaker.

Behind them roams weakside linebacker Sean Weatherspoon, an All-American candidate. On the strongside, Andrew Gachkar is swift enough to cover tight ends and slot receivers.

Cornerback Carl Gettis, a two-year starter, is the most experienced defensive back. Kenji Jackson, a spot starter late last year, stands as the favorite to start at free safety.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Jeff Wolfert finished his career as the most accurate kicker for PATs and field goals in NCAA history.

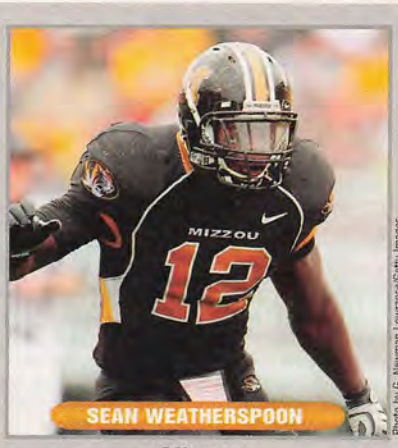
First in line to handle those duties is senior walk-on Tanner Mills, a local product who gave up a successful stint as the goalkeeper for nearby Columbia College's NAIA soccer team for a chance to win MU's kicking job.

Left-footed punter Jake Harry proved to be a consistent performer last season, utilizing a rugby style kicking approach.

OVERVIEW

If Blaine Gabbert can handle the spotlight at quarterback, manage the offense and supply a credible passing threat to open running lanes, MU's offensive production might not see the drop-off some are expecting.

The defense can't be much worse than it was in big games last year, and under fiery new coordinator Dave Steckel, some tough love and greater accountability might be just what the Tigers need.



SEAN WEATHERSPOON

Photo by G. Newman Lowrance/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Blaine Gabbert	6-5	235	So.
	Jimmy Costello	6-3	225	So.
TB	**Derrick Washington***	**5-11**	**225**	**Jr.**
	De'Vion Moore	5-9	200	So.
WR	Danario Alexander	6-5	210	Sr.
	Brandon Gerau	6-0	175	So.
WR	**Jared Perry***	**6-1**	**180**	**Sr.**
	Wes Kemp	6-4	225	So.
WR	Jerrell Jackson	6-1	190	So.
	Rolandis Woodland	6-3	195	Fr.
TE	Andrew Jones	6-5	245	So.
	Micheal Egnew	6-6	215	So.
LT	**Elvis Fisher***	**6-5**	**300**	**So.**
	Mike Prince	6-3	300	Jr.
LG	Austin Wuebbels	6-4	300	So.
	Jayson Palmgren	6-2	305	So.
C	**Tim Barnes***	**6-4**	**305**	**Jr.**
	J.T. Beasley	6-4	295	So.
RG	**Kurtis Gregory***	**6-5**	**305**	**Sr.**
	Travis Ruth	6-3	305	Fr.
RT	Dan Hoch	6-7	315	So.
	Daniel Jenkins	6-4	305	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Jacquies Smith	6-4	240	So.
	Brad Madison	6-4	260	Fr.
DT	Terrell Resonno	6-6	295	So.
	George White	6-3	250	Fr.
NT	**Jaron Baston***	**6-1**	**305**	**Sr.**
	Dominique Hamilton	6-6	290	So.
DE	Brian Coulter	6-4	255	Sr.
	Aldon Smith	6-5	245	Fr.
LB	**Sean Weatherspoon***	**6-2**	**245**	**Sr.**
	Tyler Crane	6-3	235	So.
LB	**Luke Lambert***	**6-3**	**235**	**Jr.**
	Will Ebner	6-1	230	So.
LB	Andrew Gachkar	6-3	230	Jr.
	Jeff Gettys	6-3	235	Jr.
CB	**Carl Gettis***	**5-11**	**200**	**Jr.**
	Robert Steeples	6-1	195	Fr.
CB	Kevin Rutland	6-0	195	Jr.
	Trey Hobson	5-11	190	So.
SS	Hardy Ricks	6-0	200	Sr.
	Jarrell Harrison	6-2	210	Jr.
FS	Kenji Jackson	5-10	195	So.
	Zaviar Gooden	6-2	210	Fr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Tanner Mills	6-2	200	Sr.
P	**Jake Harry***	**6-1**	**195**	**Sr.**

*** Returning Starters in Bold**

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	vs. Illinois (St. Louis)
Sept.12	BOWLING GREEN
Sept.19	FURMAN
Sept. 25	at Nevada
Oct. 8	NEBRASKA
Oct. 17	at Oklahoma State
Oct. 24	TEXAS
Oct. 31	at Colorado
Nov. 7	BAYLOR
Nov. 14	at Kansas State
Nov. 21	IOWA STATE
Nov. 28	vs. Kansas (Kansas City)

2008 Results

	(10-4, 5-3)	
W	vs. Illinois (St. Louis)	52-42
W	SOUTHEAST MISSOURI	52-3
W	NEVADA	69-17
W	BUFFALO	42-21
W	at Nebraska	52-17
L	OKLAHOMA STATE	23-28
L	at Texas	31-56
W	COLORADO	58-0
W	at Baylor	31-28
W	KANSAS STATE	41-24
W	at Iowa State	52-20
L	vs. Kansas	37-40
	Big 12 Championship Game	
L	vs. Oklahoma	21-62
	Alamo Bowl	
W	vs. Northwestern (OT)	30-23

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	42.2	6
Rushing	153.8	52
Passing	330.4	4
Total	484.1	8
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	27.2	69
Rushing	124.9	31
Passing	286.6	117
Total	411.5	98
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 4	- 0.29	79

BAYLOR BEARS

NATIONAL RANK 54

Big 12 rank: 8 | Record: 4-8 | Big 12 record: 2-6 (T-5th, South) | Stadium: Floyd Casey Stadium (50,000)

Bears in A Box

COACH: Art Briles — At Baylor: 4-8, 1 year; overall: 38-36, 6 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Randy Clements and Philip Montgomery
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brian Norwood
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1994, Southwest Conference co-champs
LAST BOWL: 1994, Alamo
RETURNING STARTER: 18; 8 offense, 8 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Robert Griffin, RB Jay Finley, WR Kendall Wright, C J.D. Walton, OT Danny Watkins, DT Phil Taylor, MLB Joe Pawelek, FS Jordan Lake
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Griffin, a Freshman All-American, is one of the most versatile quarterbacks in the country, opening up the offense for Finley and Wright. Pawelek is a smart, instinctive middle linebacker who is the hub of the defense. There isn't a more fierce tackler in the Big 12 than Lake.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Bears must rebuild at offensive tackle and also need to develop more receiving threats. After finishing with just 21 sacks last year, Baylor needs to put more pressure on quarterbacks. CBs Antareis Bryan, Tim Atchison and Trentson Hill must deliver consistent performances against the Big 12's big-time quarterbacks.

OFFENSE

Robert Griffin, who stepped into the lineup last season as a true freshman, is one of the nation's most explosive quarterbacks, passing for 2,091 yards and 15 touchdowns and rushing for 843 yards and 13 scores.

Griffin combines blazing speed with an accurate arm and uncommon intelligence for a young quarterback. Just as important, his dual-threat capabilities were perfect for coach Art Briles' offense, which combines elements of the spread and option.

Griffin also has plenty of supporting talent. Jay Finley rushed for a team-high 865 yards and seven touchdowns last year, while Kendall Wright had a superb freshman year by catching 50 passes for 649 yards and five touchdowns.

Terrance Ganaway, a transfer from Houston, will add depth to the backfield, while redshirt freshman Jarred Salubi gives the Bears a running and catching threat.

Baylor's receiving corps will be bolstered by returners Ernest Smith, David Gettis and Justin Akers, while redshirt freshmen Terrance Williams and Lanear Sampson likely will be in the rotation.

Baylor's biggest task will be replacing All-American Jason Smith and three-year starter Dan Gay at tackle. Junior college transfers Danny Watkins, Marquis Franklin and Philip Blake will have to contribute immediately.

Briles believes senior center J.D. Walton will be one of the best in the country.

DEFENSE

The Bears will feature two of the best defensive players in the Big 12 — seniors Joe Pawelek and Jordan Lake.

Pawelek ranked second in the Big 12 with 10.7 tackles per game while intercepting six passes from his middle linebacker spot. Lake was a terror at safety as he recorded 8.1 tackles per game and intercepted three passes.

The Bears will feature one of the best linebacking corps in the league with Pawelek, Antonio Jones and Antonio Johnson. The line will get a major boost from Penn State transfer Phil Taylor, a massive tackle who should be Baylor's most dominant defensive lineman in years.

The Bears need young defensive ends Zac Scotton, Tracy Robertson and Fredric Plesius to make an impact after the team recorded just 21 sacks last year.

Cornerbacks Antareis Bryan, Tim Atchison and Trentson Hill must also give the Bears more consistent pass coverage against the Big 12's top-flight quarterbacks.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Stepping in for Ray Guy Award winner Daniel Sepulveda the past two years, Derek Epperson has proven to be a worthy successor. He ranked among the Big 12's best punters with a 44.3-yard average last season.

After some shaky early moments, Ben Parks hit 6 of 9 field goals as a freshman last year, but he needs to improve his kickoff distance. Mikail Baker is back to return kicks after averaging 25.3 yards last year. Krys Buerck will handle punt returns.

OVERVIEW

Briles, in his second season, believes the Bears can reach a bowl for the first time since 1994. Though they finished just 4-8 last season, they lost three games by a touchdown or less.

The Bears need the offensive line to develop quickly while the defense must prove it can slow some of the Big 12's powerful offenses. If the Bears can beat Wake Forest on the road in the season opener, they could ride that momentum into Big 12 play. Perhaps a winning season could hinge on the season finale against Texas Tech at the Dallas Cowboys' new stadium.

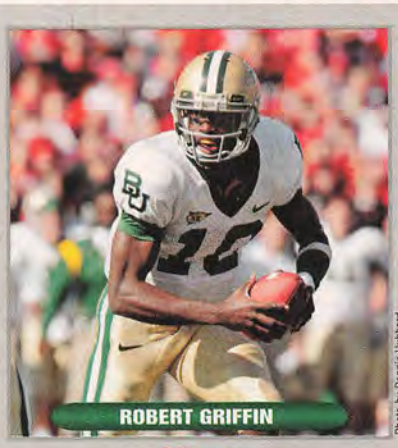

ROBERT GRIFFIN

Photo by Dennis Hubbard

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Robert Griffin***	**6-3**	**200**	**So.**
	Blake Szymanski	6-4	205	Sr.
RB	**Jay Finley***	**5-11**	**205**	**Jr.**
	Jarred Salubi	5-10	190	Fr.
WR	**David Gettis***	**6-4**	**210**	**Sr.**
	Terrance Williams	6-2	190	Fr.
WR	**Kendall Wright***	**5-11**	**180**	**So.**
	Justin Fenty	5-9	175	Sr.
WR	**Ernest Smith***	**6-3**	**195**	**Sr.**
	Krys Buerck	5-11	180	Sr.
TE	**Justin Akers***	**6-5**	**245**	**Sr.**
	Brad Taylor	6-3	235	Jr.
LT	Danny Watkins	6-4	310	Jr.
	Joe Korbel	6-6	265	So.
LG	John Jones	6-4	300	So.
	Jake Jackson	6-3	285	Fr.
C	**J.D. Walton***	**6-3**	**305**	**Sr.**
	Jake Jackson	6-3	285	Fr.
RG	**James Barnard***	**6-4**	**295**	**Sr.**
	Ivory Wade	6-5	305	Fr.
RT	Marquis Franklin	6-7	320	Jr.
	Philip Blake	6-3	305	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Tracy Robertson	6-4	260	So.
	Fredric Plesius	6-1	260	Fr.
DT	Phil Taylor	6-4	355	Jr.
	Jason Lamb*	**6-5**	**270**	**Sr.**
NG	**Trey Bryant***	**6-2**	**310**	**Sr.**
	Nicolas Jean-Baptiste	6-1	300	So.
DE	Zac Scotton	6-7	260	So.
	Jameon Hardeman	6-1	230	Jr.
LB	**Antonio Jones***	**6-2**	**225**	**Sr.**
	Chris Francis	6-0	235	Jr.
LB	**Joe Pawelek***	**6-2**	**240**	**Sr.**
	Earl Patin	6-2	225	Jr.
LB	**Antonio Johnson***	**6-0**	**210**	**Jr.**
	Elliot Coffey	6-0	220	So.
CB	Antareis Bryan	6-2	190	Jr.
	Trentson Hill*	**6-0**	**185**	**So.**
CB	Tim Atchison	6-1	205	Jr.
	Clifton Odom	5-11	195	Jr.
SS	**Jeremy Williams***	**5-11**	**205**	**Sr.**
	Jeremy Sanders	6-2	210	Sr.
FS	**Jordan Lake***	**6-1**	**210**	**Sr.**
	T.J. Scranton	5-11	190	Sr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Ben Parks***	**6-2**	**205**	**So.**
P	**Derek Epperson***	**6-3**	**240**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	at Wake Forest
Sept. 19	CONNECTICUT
Sept. 26	NORTHWESTERN STATE
Oct. 3	KENT STATE
Oct. 10	at Oklahoma
Oct. 17	at Iowa State
Oct. 24	OKLAHOMA STATE
Oct. 31	NEBRASKA
Nov. 7	at Missouri
Nov. 14	TEXAS
Nov. 21	at Texas A&M
Nov. 28	TEXAS TECH (Arlington)

2008 Results

(4-8, 2-6)

L	vs. Wake Forest	13-41
W	vs. Northwestern State	51-6
W	vs. Washington State	45-17
L	at Connecticut	28-31
L	vs. Oklahoma	17-49
W	vs. Iowa State	38-10
L	at Oklahoma State	6-34
L	at Nebraska	20-32
L	vs. Missouri	28-31
L	at Texas	21-45
W	vs. Texas A&M	41-21
L	at Texas Tech	28-35

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	28.0	42
Rushing	195.8	21
Passing	180.7	92
Total	376.4	46
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	29.3	87
Rushing	137.9	53
Passing	255.3	103
Total	393.2	85
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 16	+ 1.33	4

COLORADO BUFFALOES

NATIONAL RANK 60

Big 12 rank: 9 | Record: 5-7 | Big 12 record: 2-6 (T-3th, North) | Stadium: Folsum Field (53,750)

Buffaloes in A Box

COACH: Dan Hawkins — At Colorado: 13-24, 3 years; overall: 66-35, 8 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Eric Kiesau
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ron Collins
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2001
LAST BOWL: 2007, Independence
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 10 offense, 4 defense, punter, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Cody Hawkins, QB Tyler Hansen, RB Darrell Scott, WR Markques Simas, WR/KR Josh Smith, CB Jimmy Smith, LB Shaun Mohler
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Buffs have two capable quarterbacks with experience and a big, talented offensive line. The tight end and tailback spots are loaded, and the secondary and linebackers have deep talent pools as well.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Replacing three starters on the defensive line is bound to lead to some ugly moments. At least two true freshmen are expected to compete for playing time. The placekickers will be looking to redeem themselves.

OFFENSE

Coaches say the shotgun, spread, no-huddle approach from last year will remain in the arsenal, but the team has returned to huddling most of the time. Colorado will shuttle players in and out depending on play calls and personnel groupings.

It is the second year in a row the coaches are making major scheme changes on offense, but this seems to be a wise move. The strength of the team is not in its quarterback and wide receivers, but in its offensive line, running backs and tight ends.

The Buffs might be the only team in the Big 12 Conference trying to run it down the opponent's throat every week, mixing in some well-timed, play-action passes.

The Buffaloes have four tailbacks capable of handling that load. The logical bet is that Darrell Scott starts and averages 15 to 20 carries a game, with Rodney Stewart, Demetrius Sumler and Brian Lockridge splitting another 15-20 carries.

Scott was the No. 1 running back recruit in the nation in 2008.

All four are also threats to catch passes out of the backfield.

DEFENSE

The Buffs lose six of their top 10 tacklers from a team that led the Big 12 in pass defense and finished fourth in total defense.

The biggest losses are on the line. Coaches are hoping to get contributions from at least two of the four defensive linemen signed in the 2009 recruiting class. The most likely early contributor is Nick Kasa, who was one of the top five defensive ends in the nation in the 2009 class.

This defense showed a lot of 3-4 looks in spring ball. The Buffs are two deep at each of four linebacker positions.

The two leading tacklers from last season, Jeff Smart and Shaun Mohler, are playing the same weakside position this year, while Marcus Burton moves back to the middle.

Outside linebackers B.J. Beatty and Douglas Rippy have size, speed and athleticism that has everyone in the program excited.

The secondary is deep. Sophomores Patrick Mahnke and Anthony Perkins got enough playing time last season that there won't be a steep drop-off at safety.

Senior cornerback Ben Burney returns from a redshirt year in which he underwent five surgeries. Senior cornerback Cha'pelle Brown is among the most experienced defenders in the conference, and juniors Jimmy Smith and Jalil Brown have started to emerge as big playmakers. Smith has all-conference potential.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Colorado's placekickers and punters were replaced late in the season. Aric Goodman and Jameson Davis combined to make just 6 of 17 field goal attempts. Goodman missed eight in a row at one point and had five kicks bounce off the uprights.

The program signed combination kicker/punter Zach Grossnickle, a freshman who could be called on early if the kickers and punter Matt DiLallo struggle again.

OVERVIEW

This is year four for this coaching staff and it's time for the offense to produce better numbers after ranking in the bottom third of the league in the past three seasons. The defense might struggle early with a new line, making it even more important for the offense to be prolific. This team has to win its home games and steal a couple on the road.

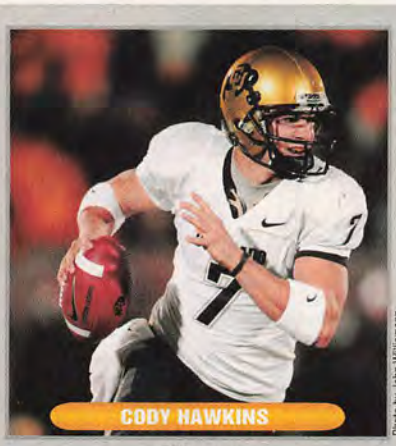

CODY HAWKINS

Photo by John Williamson

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Cody Hawkins***	**5-11**	**190**	**Jr.**
	Tyler Hansen	6-1	200	So.
RB	Darrell Scott	6-1	200	So.
	Demetrius Sumler*	**5-10**	**215**	**Jr.**
FB	Jake Behrens	6-0	240	Sr.
	Trace Adams	6-0	210	Sr.
WR	**Josh Smith***	**6-0**	**190**	**Jr.**
	Markques Simas	6-2	200	So.
WR	**Scotty McKnight***	**5-11**	**185**	**Jr.**
	Jason Espinoza	5-8	175	So.
TE	**Riar Geer***	**6-4**	**250**	**Sr.**
	Ryan Deehan*	**6-5**	**240**	**So.**
LT	**Nate Solder***	**6-9**	**300**	**Jr.**
	Ryan Dannewitz	6-6	290	Fr.
LG	**Blake Behrens***	**6-3**	**290**	**So.**
	Ethan Adkins	6-4	295	So.
C	Mike Iltis	6-3	275	So.
	Keenan Stevens	6-2	285	Jr.
RG	Ryan Miller	6-8	310	So.
	Devin Head*	**6-4**	**290**	**Sr.**
RT	Bryce Givens	6-6	275	Fr.
	Matthew Bahr*	**6-4**	**285**	**So.**

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DT	Taj Kaynor	6-5	265	Sr.
	Curtis Cunningham	6-1	275	So.
NT	Eugene Goree	6-1	295	So.
	Eric Lawson	6-3	250	Jr.
DE	Marquez Herrod	6-2	265	Jr.
	Nick Kasa	6-7	250	Fr.
LB	Douglas Rippy	6-1	230	Fr.
	Tyler Ahles	6-2	240	So.
LB	**Jeff Smart***	**6-0**	**225**	**Sr.**
	Shaun Mohler*	**6-3**	**220**	**Sr.**
LB	Marcus Burton	6-0	260	Sr.
	Michael Sipili	6-1	240	Jr.
LB	B.J. Beatty	6-2	220	Jr.
	Douglas Rippy	6-1	230	Fr.
CB	Jimmy Smith	6-2	200	Jr.
	Jalil Brown*	**6-1**	**205**	**Jr.**
CB	**Cha'pelle Brown***	**5-7**	**170**	**Sr.**
	Benjamin Burney	5-11	190	Sr.
SS	Patrick Mahnke	6-1	205	So.
	Vince Ewing	6-0	200	Fr.
FS	Anthony Perkins	5-10	200	So.
	Travis Sandersfeld	6-0	205	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Aric Goodman***	**5-10**	**185**	**Jr.**
P	**Matt DiLallo***	**6-1**	**200**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	COLORADO STATE
Sept. 11	at Toledo
Sept. 19	WYOMING
Oct. 1	at West Virginia
Oct. 10	at Texas
Oct. 17	KANSAS
Oct. 24	at Kansas State
Oct. 31	MISSOURI
Nov. 7	TEXAS A&M
Nov. 14	at Iowa State
Nov. 19	at Oklahoma State
Nov. 27	NEBRASKA

2008 Results

(5-7, 2-6)

W	Colorado State	38-17
W	EASTERN WASHINGTON	31-24
W	WEST VIRGINIA (OT)	17-14
L	vs. Florida State (Jacksonville)	21-39
L	TEXAS	14-38
L	at Kansas	14-30
W	KANSAS STATE	14-13
L	at Missouri	0-58
L	at Texas A&M	17-24
W	IOWA STATE	28-24
L	OKLAHOMA STATE	17-30
L	at Nebraska	31-40

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	20.2	100
Rushing	124.5	86
Passing	194.0	81
Total	318.5	95
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	29.3	86
Rushing	166.3	86
Passing	215.3	72
Total	381.6	78
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 7	- 0.58	94

TEXAS A&M AGGIES

NATIONAL RANK 63

Big 12 rank: 10 | Record: 4-8 | Big 12 record: 2-6 (T-5th, South) | Stadium: Kyle Field (82,600)

Aggies in A Box

COACH: Mike Sherman — At Texas A&M: 4-8, 1 year; overall: 61-47, 7 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Nolan Cromwell
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Joe Kines
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1998
LAST BOWL: 2007, Alamo
RETURNING STARTERS: 17; 9 offense, 7 defense, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Jerrod Johnson, QB/WR Ryan Tannehill, WR Jeff Fuller, DE/LB Von Miller, S Jordan Pugh, S Trent Hunter, RB/KR Cyrus Gray, TE Jamie McCoy
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Aggies feature a solid collection of skill players, especially if Johnson continues to elevate his game. Johnson has a pair of exciting targets in Ryan Tannehill and Jeff Fuller. The defense, led by Miller and a solid secondary, is improving.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: While the Aggies have experience along the offensive line, it is still a unit that had all kinds of troubles last year. And, while the defense should be better, it's still a unit that was among the worst in the nation, unable to slow the Big 12's high-powered attacks.

OFFENSE

Second-year Texas A&M coach Mike Sherman has a theory about great teams: "Any championship team I have ever been on or studied has always been good up front," he said.

The reverse is also true.

The Aggies weren't very good up front at the start of last year, and a barrage of injuries to offensive linemen caused A&M to grow progressively worse. A&M finished 11th or 12th in the Big 12 in 2008 in scoring, rushing and total offense.

Any hope for dramatic improvement hinges on keeping three returning starters healthy and quickly developing promising youngsters — including some true freshmen — along the offensive front. Projected starter Lucas Patterson started on the defensive line last season, but is a rookie on the O-line.

A&M returns playmakers at the skill positions. Junior quarterback Jerrod Johnson started 10 games last year, throwing for a school-record 21 touchdowns and passing for at least three scores in four games.

But sophomore Ryan Tannehill — who was super at receiver as a freshman — will battle Johnson for the starting job in fall camp. The loser of that battle could end up at receiver opposite explosive sophomore Jeff Fuller, who has great hands and body control.

Sophomore tailbacks Cyrus Gray and Bradley Stephens are also weapons, while true freshman Christine Michael features a rare combination of power and breakaway speed.

DEFENSE

A&M is still light years away from returning to the dominant Wrecking Crew days of the late 1980s and early '90s. But, at the very least, the 2009 defense should take a step forward from a unit that produced just 16 sacks and allowed 449 points last season.

Defensive end/outside linebacker Von Miller is playing a new "jack" position, and he certainly resembles a jack of all trades to lead the front. Sophomore tackles Tony Jerod-Eddie and Eddie Brown could also emerge as stars.

A&M is committed to playing faster linebackers, which means youngsters like Garrick Williams, Kyle Mangan and Ricky Cavanaugh could unseat seniors such as Anthony Lewis and Matt Featherston.

The secondary could also be dramatically improved in 2009, as A&M features a pair of outstanding safeties in sophomore Trent Hunter and senior Jordan Pugh. A&M possesses promising corners in sophomore Terrence Frederick and junior college transfer Coryell Judie.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Cyrus Gray broke the school's freshman season record for all-purpose yards last year primarily because he proved to be an electrifying kick returner. Gray finished his first season with 1,592 all-purpose yards, which broke the mark of 1,551 set by Dante Hall in 1996.

About halfway through last season, Randy Bullock emerged as a steady performer at placekicker, hitting 6 of 7 field goals.

The big concern is replacing punter Justin Brantly. The Aggies will give true freshman Ryan Epperson, who averaged better than 43 yards per punt as a senior in high school, that opportunity.

OVERVIEW

Whether it's Jerrod Johnson or Ryan Tannehill who emerges at quarterback, the Aggies must be better on the offensive line, which could happen because of the arrival of LSU transfer Matt Allen and the development of converted defensive lineman Lucas Patterson. The Aggies have added speed and athleticism on defense, and with a break or two, it's not totally out of the question that A&M could return to bowl eligibility.

JERROD JOHNSON

Photo by: John Williamson

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Jerrod Johnson***	**6-5**	**229**	**Jr.**
	Ryan Tannehill	6-4	204	So.
RB	**Cyrus Gray***	**5-10**	**188**	**So.**
	Bradley Stephens	5-10	204	So.
WR	**Jeff Fuller***	**6-4**	**209**	**So.**
	Howard Morrow	6-0	206	Sr.
WR	**Ryan Tannehill***	**6-4**	**204**	**So.**
	Jeremy Brown	6-2	197	Jr.
WR	**Terrence McCoy***	**6-4**	**198**	**Jr.**
	Cody Beyer	6-1	177	Jr.
TE	**Jamie McCoy***	**6-3**	**224**	**Sr.**
	K.J. Williams	6-3	233	So.
LT	Lucas Patterson	6-4	297	Jr.
	Brian Thomas	6-3	270	Fr.
LG	**Michael Shumard***	**6-5**	**301**	**Sr.**
	Evan Eike	6-4	303	So.
C	**Kevin Matthews***	**6-4**	**297**	**Sr.**
	Danny Baker	6-5	296	So.
RG	Matt Allen	6-2	298	Jr.
	Evan Eike	6-4	303	So.
RT	**Lee Grimes***	**6-6**	**339**	**Sr.**
	Vincent Williams	6-4	314	Sr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Von Miller***	**6-3**	**214**	**Jr.**
	Matt Featherston	6-2	235	Sr.
DT	Eddie Brown	6-0	265	So.
	Rod Davis	6-1	305	Fr.
DT	**Tony Jerod-Eddie***	**6-5**	**256**	**So.**
	Ben Bass	6-5	258	So.
DE	Matt Moss	6-3	253	Sr.
	Cody Williams	6-4	262	Jr.
LB	**Garrick Williams***	**6-2**	**217**	**So.**
	Derek Dumas	6-0	221	Jr.
LB	Kyle Mangan	6-2	222	Fr.
	Matt Featherston*	**6-2**	**235**	**Sr.**
LB	Ricky Cavanaugh	6-2	215	So.
	Michael Hodges	6-0	214	So.
CB	**Terrence Frederick***	**5-10**	**170**	**So.**
	Justin McQueen	6-0	183	Fr.
CB	Coryell Judie	5-11	185	Jr.
	Jordan Peterson	5-10	184	Sr.
SS	**Jordan Pugh***	**5-11**	**191**	**Sr.**
	DeMaurier Thompson	6-1	185	Jr.
FS	**Trent Hunter***	**5-10**	**185**	**So.**
	Chevar Bryson	5-11	182	Sr..

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Randy Bullock***	**5-9**	**208**	**So.**
P	Ryan Epperson	6-2	180	Fr.

*** Returning Starters in Bold**

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	NEW MEXICO
Sept. 19	UTAH STATE
Sept. 26	UAB
Oct. 3	vs. Arkansas (Arlington, TX)
Oct. 10	OKLAHOMA STATE
Oct. 17	at Kansas State
Oct. 24	at Texas Tech
Oct. 31	IOWA STATE
Nov. 7	at Colorado
Nov. 14	at Oklahoma
Nov. 21	BAYLOR
Nov. 26	TEXAS

2008 Results

	(4-8, 2-6)	
L	ARKANSAS STATE	14-18
W	at New Mexico	28-22
L	MIAMI	23-41
W	ARMY	21-17
L	at Oklahoma State	28-56
L	KANSAS STATE	30-44
L	vs. TEXAS TECH	25-43
W	at Iowa State	49-35
W	COLORADO	24-17
L	OKLAHOMA	28-66
L	at Baylor	21-41
L	at Texas	9-49

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.0	64
Rushing	88.5	114
Passing	252.4	27
Total	340.9	78
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	37.4	114
Rushing	219.3	114
Passing	242.7	95
Total	461.9	114
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 10	- 0.83	104

KANSAS STATE WILDCATS

NATIONAL RANK 70

Big 12 rank: 11 | Record: 5-7 | Big 12 record: 2-6 (4th, North) | Stadium: Bill Snyder Family Stadium (50,000)

Wildcats in A Box

COACH: Bill Snyder — At K-State and overall: 136-68-1, 17 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Del Miller, Dana Dimel
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Vic Koenning, Chris Cosh
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2003
LAST BOWL: 2006, Texas
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 6 offense, 8 defense, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: DE Brandon Harold, CB Joshua Moore, FS Tysyn Hartman, WR Lamark Brown, WR Brandon Banks, RB Keithen Valentine
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: There is talent on the defensive line, especially if Virginia transfer Jeffrey Fitzgerald comes through. In the secondary, Moore is an All-Big 12 candidate. If the secondary newcomers pan out, the defense could be much improved. Snyder brought in an excellent staff.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: An overall lack of depth. If the Wildcats sustain injuries, they will fall apart fast. Even healthy, there are questions about the offensive line, a new starting quarterback and other skill-position players who are undersized. Snyder has not faced a challenge like this since the early 1990s.

OFFENSE

Size — or a lack thereof — might be a theme for Kansas State.

The Wildcats could start 5-8 Keithen Valentine at tailback, though he could get pushed for playing time by 5-9 freshmen John Hubert or Timothy Flanders.

The Wildcats' best receiver last season was 5-7 waterbug Brandon Banks, who topped 1,000 yards and earned Big 12 Offensive Newcomer of the Year honors.

Not everyone is small. K-State's leading rusher last season, 6-3 Lamark Brown, returns to wide receiver, his natural position.

The biggest loss, relatively, is quarterback Josh Freeman, a first-round NFL draft pick. Junior Carson Coffman was his backup last season. He will get the first chance to start. A 6-3 pocket passer, Coffman spent the spring and summer learning how to run the option, too.

That style of offense could lead to playing time for junior college transfer Daniel Thomas, a terrific athlete at 6-2, 227 pounds.

Tight end Jeron Mastrud, who has started 29 games, had 38 catches for 435 yards last season.

Senior Nick Stringer should man the left tackle position. The right tackle spot could again be a work in progress with sophomores Clyde Aufner and Zach Hanson competing to start.

At guard, Brock Unruh has experience, but Colten Freeze was a pleasant surprise last season and junior Trevor Viers returns from injury.

Zach Kendall returns after starting at center, but he might get pushed to guard by Wade Weibert.

DEFENSE

A unit that was one of the worst nationally could be improved. It starts with ends Brandon Harold and Eric Childs. Harold was a Freshman All-American, the leading freshman nationally with 10.5 tackles for loss. Childs, a senior, could improve on his 27 unassisted tackles and 6.5 tackles for loss.

A big key could be getting Virginia transfer Jeffrey Fitzgerald to play well right away at tackle. Fitzgerald started 25 games and had 23.5 tackles for loss in two seasons with the Cavaliers.

Senior Ulla Pomele leads the linebackers, with Alex Hrebec and John Houlik returning, as well.

Joshua Moore is one of the conference's best pure corners, but there is no sure thing opposite him. The Wildcats signed seven secondary players, and some will have to play right away.

At free safety, sophomore Tysyn Hartman was impressive last season considering he was still a quarterback even three games into the season. At 6-3, he is a high-level athlete now learning the details of the position. Strong safety Courtney Herndon is a consistent performer.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Junior Josh Cherry should take over for the departed Brooks Rossman at kicker. At punter, D.J. Fulhage returns after averaging 38.1 yards last season.

The Wildcats will count on Brandon Banks in the return game. He was 15th nationally and second in the Big 12 with a 28-yard average on kickoff returns.

OVERVIEW

Kansas State fans might idolize Bill Snyder, but most are realistic in his return to coaching. If the Wildcats can just show signs of hope and recovery, Snyder, who will turn 70 during the season, will have done a terrific job.

The schedule is not overly difficult, but Missouri and Kansas have improved since Snyder re-signed after the 2005 season. That will not make his first season back any easier.

BRANDON BANKS

Photo by © Cal Sport Media

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Carson Coffman	6-3	212	Jr.
	Daniel Thomas	6-2	227	Jr.
RB	Keithen Valentine	5-8	193	Sr.
	Timothy Flanders	5-9	191	Fr.
RB	Logan Dold	6-0	207	So.
	John Hubert	5-9	190	Fr.
WR	**Brandon Banks***	**5-7**	**150**	**Sr.**
	Aubrey Quarles	5-11	195	Sr.
WR	**Lamark Brown***	**6-3**	**225**	**Jr.**
	Adrian Hilburn	6-1	195	Jr.
TE	**Jeron Mastrud***	**6-6**	**253**	**Sr.**
	Jayson Cuba	6-2	240	So.
LT	**Nick Stringer***	**6-6**	**271**	**Sr.**
	Zach Hanson	6-8	320	So.
LG	**Brock Unruh***	**6-6**	**288**	**Sr.**
	Eric Benoit	6-4	286	Sr.
C	Wade Weibert	6-4	287	Jr.
	Zach Kendall*	**6-3**	**287**	**Jr.**
RG	Colten Freeze	6-5	287	So.
	Trevor Viers	6-5	284	Jr.
RT	Clyde Aufner	6-7	288	So.
	Zach Hanson	6-8	320	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Brandon Harold***	**6-6**	**264**	**So.**
	Payton Kirk	6-6	245	So.
DT	**Daniel Calvin***	**6-3**	**310**	**Sr.**
	Xzavier Stewart	6-1	316	Jr.
DT	Jeffrey Fitzgerald	6-4	280	Jr.
	Gabriel Crews	6-1	310	Jr.
DE	**Eric Childs***	**6-3**	**238**	**Sr.**
	Raphael Guidry	6-4	267	So.
LB	**Ulla Pomele***	**6-1**	**228**	**Sr.**
	Hansen Sekona	6-0	230	Sr.
LB	**Alex Hrebec***	**5-11**	**238**	**So.**
	Josh Berard	6-2	220	Jr.
LB	John Houlik	5-11	219	Sr.
	Dahrnaz Tigner	6-2	223	Jr.
CB	**Joshua Moore***	**5-11**	**184**	**Jr.**
	Troy Butler	6-1	190	Jr.
CB	Otis Johnson	5-10	175	Sr.
	Thomas Ferguson	6-1	205	Fr.
SS	**Courtney Herndon***	**6-0**	**211**	**Sr.**
	Carlton Callendar	6-1	186	Fr.
FS	**Tysyn Hartman***	**6-3**	**207**	**So.**
	Chris Carney	6-1	190	Sr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Josh Cherry	6-1	183	Jr.
P	**D.J. Fulhage***	**5-9**	**180**	**Jr.**

*** Returning Starters in Bold**

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	MASSACHUSETTS
Sept. 12	at Louisiana-Lafayette
Sept. 19	at UCLA
Sept. 26	TENNESSEE TECH
Oct. 3	vs. Iowa State (Kansas City)
Oct. 10	at Texas Tech
Oct. 17	TEXAS A&M
Oct. 24	COLORADO
Oct. 31	at Oklahoma
Nov. 7	KANSAS
Nov. 14	MISSOURI
Nov. 21	at Nebraska

2008 Results

(5-7, 2-6)

W	NORTH TEXAS	45-6
W	MONTANA STATE	69-10
L	at Louisville	29-38
W	LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE	45-37
L	TEXAS TECH	28-58
W	at Texas A&M	44-30
L	at Colorado	13-14
L	OKLAHOMA	35-58
L	at Kansas	21-52
L	at Missouri	24-41
L	NEBRASKA	28-56
W	IOWA STATE	38-30

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	34.9	19
Rushing	132.5	76
Passing	269.6	19
Total	402.1	34
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	35.8	110
Rushing	217.7	112
Passing	261.4	106
Total	479.1	117
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 7	- 0.58	94

IOWA STATE CYCLONES

NATIONAL RANK 91

Big 12 rank: 12 | Record: 2-10 | Big 12 record: 0-8 (6th, North) | Stadium: Jack Trice Stadium (55,000)

Cyclones in A Box

COACH: Paul Rhoads — At Iowa State and overall, 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tom Herman
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Wally Burnham
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1912, Missouri Valley co-champions
LAST BOWL: 2005, Houston
RETURNING STARTERS: 17; 9 offense, 6 defense, punter, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Austen Arnaud, WR Darius Darks, WR Sedrick Johnson, RB Alexander Robinson, LB Jesse Smith, CB Leonard Johnson, DE Christopher Lyle
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Almost every one of the team's offensive skill players return to what should be a potent attack in new offensive coordinator Tom Herman's spread offense. Arnaud has the skill, experience and leadership ability to thrive.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: A defense that was absolutely shredded last season still is young and without many playmakers. Open-field tackling must improve greatly with all the offensive talent in the Big 12. The offensive line can't afford injuries.

OFFENSE

If you can't beat 'em, join 'em. That's one explanation for why Iowa State has joined the growing number of teams operating spread offenses.

The Cyclones and new coordinator Tom Herman have a lot of reasons to believe they can be pretty good at it, starting with junior quarterback Austen Arnaud. Arnaud will be in the shotgun throwing to receivers like Darius Darks and Sedrick Johnson, each of whom showed promise as true freshmen last season.

Veterans like Marquis Hamilton and Houston Jones are solid, and tight end Collin Franklin should create match-up problems on the outside with his size and quickness.

Tailback Alexander Robinson is the best of a three-man rotation in the backfield. The offensive line isn't hugely talented, but finally has some experience. Most important is solidifying the left tackle spot, which is where veteran Ben Lamaak might ultimately end up.

DEFENSE

A leaky defense was the biggest reason the Cyclones won just two games — none in the Big 12 — a year ago.

The new coaching staff has been big on re-teaching basic, fundamental principles, tackling in particular. ISU ranked 112th out of 119 teams in total defense, allowing 452.8 yards a game.

There are holes to fill on the line and at linebacker, and the secondary needs to get a lot better. Nose guard Nate Frere, middle linebacker Jesse Smith and safety James Smith are the veterans of this unit. They'll need to step their games up in their senior seasons.

Cornerbacks Leonard Johnson and Ter'ran Benton started as freshmen and should be improved, while newcomers such as linebacker Matt Taufoou and lineman Jake McDonough must hit the ground running.

Strong safety David Sims joined the team in time for spring practice and will be one of the incoming players who sees the field a lot.

SPECIAL TEAMS

ISU's kicking game is solid with punter Mike Brandtner and placekicker Grant Mahoney. Brandtner is a fourth-year starter who seems to get better each season. He averaged a career-best 41.6 yards and dropped 19 punts inside opponents' 20-yard line last year.

Mahoney hopes to build on a successful freshman season in which he made 17 of 25 field goal attempts and didn't seem intimidated by the moment.

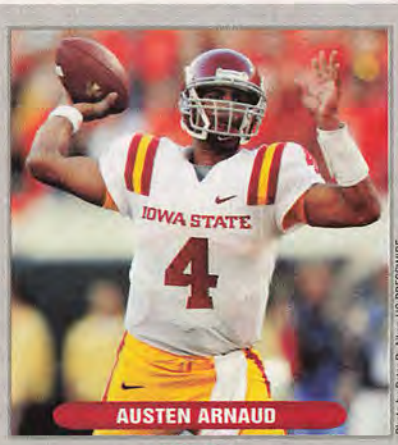
Leonard Johnson handles kick returns. Iowa State will search for a punt returner in fall camp. Johnson averaged 26.4 yards a return last year. He set a FBS single-game record with 319 yards against Oklahoma State.

OVERVIEW

Scoring points shouldn't be a huge worry for coach Paul Rhoads in his first season as head coach at Iowa State. The former Pittsburgh and Auburn defensive coordinator — he also was a position coach with the Cyclones from 1995 to '99 — is not going to stand for a repeat effort from a defense that was one of the worst in college football.

This could be the season to make a move, as the schedule toughens considerably the following two years with a change in the rotation of Big 12 South Division teams.

ISU has some talented offensive personnel, led by Arnaud. If the Cyclones can get some confidence early in the non-conference season while improving on defense, there might be hope for a .500 season.



AUSTEN ARNAUD

Photo by Peter G. Aiken-US PRESSWIRE

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Austen Arnaud***	**6-3**	**220**	**Jr.**
	Jerome Tiller	6-4	185	Fr.
RB	**Alexander Robinson***	**5-10**	**184**	**Jr.**
	Jeremiah Schwartz	5-11	238	Fr.
WR	Marquis Hamilton	6-4	228	Sr.
	Houston Jones*	**6-1**	**193**	**Sr.**
WR	**Darius Darks***	**6-1**	**175**	**So.**
	Darius Reynolds	6-3	190	Jr.
WR	Sedrick Johnson	6-4	199	So.
	Lonzie Range	6-3	183	Fr.
TE	Collin Franklin	6-6	248	Jr.
	Derrick Catlett*	**6-4**	**252**	**Sr.**
LT	**Ben Lamaak***	**6-5**	**320**	**Jr.**
	Matt Hulbert*	**6-7**	**299**	**Jr.**
LG	**Reggie Stephens***	**6-4**	**338**	**Sr.**
	Joseph Klerekoper	6-5	305	So.
C	**Alex Alvarez***	**6-2**	**294**	**Jr.**
	Ethan Tuftee	6-4	294	Fr.
RG	Kelechi Osemele	6-5	338	So.
	Trey Baysinger	6-6	317	So.
RT	Hayworth Hicks	6-3	354	Jr.
	Scott Haughton	6-4	355	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Christopher Lyle	6-4	252	Sr.
	Cleyon Laing	6-3	268	Fr.
DT	**Nate Frere***	**6-1**	**283**	**Sr.**
	Stephen Ruempolhamer	6-3	290	So.
DT	Austin Alburtis	6-2	267	Jr.
	Jake McDonough	6-6	259	Fr.
DE	**Rashawn Parker***	**6-0**	**260**	**Sr.**
	Roosevelt Maggitt	6-2	237	Fr.
LB	Matt Taufoou	6-1	235	Jr.
	Josh Raven	5-11	230	Sr.
LB	**Jesse Smith***	**6-0**	**231**	**Sr.**
	Derec Schmidgall	6-2	230	Sr.
LB	**Fred Garrin***	**6-2**	**230**	**Sr.**
	A.J. Matthews	6-3	197	So.
CB	**Leonard Johnson***	**5-10**	**189**	**So.**
	Devin McDowell	5-9	177	Jr.
CB	Ter'ran Benton	6-1	196	So.
	Kennard Banks	5-10	189	Sr.
SS	David Sims	5-10	212	Jr.
	Zac Sandvig	5-10	190	Jr.
FS	**James Smith***	**5-9**	**191**	**Sr.**
	Michael O'Connell	6-0	201	Jr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Grant Mahoney***	**6-1**	**154**	**So.**
P	**Mike Brandtner***	**6-1**	**211**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 3	NORTH DAKOTA STATE
Sept. 12	IOWA
Sept. 19	at Kent State
Sept. 26	ARMY
Oct. 3	vs. Kansas State (Kansas City)
Oct. 10	at Kansas
Oct. 17	BAYLOR
Oct. 24	at Nebraska
Oct. 31	at Texas A&M
Nov. 7	OKLAHOMA STATE
Nov. 14	COLORADO
Nov. 21	at Missouri

2008 Results

(2-10, 0-8)

W	SOUTH DAKOTA STATE	44-17
W	KENT STATE	48-28
L	at Iowa	5-17
L	at UNLV (OT)	31-34
L	KANSAS	33-35
L	at Baylor	10-38
L	NEBRASKA	7-35
L	TEXAS A&M	35-49
L	at Oklahoma State	17-59
L	at Colorado	24-28
L	MISSOURI	20-52
L	at Kansas State	30-38

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.3	59
Rushing	138.4	67
Passing	248.4	31
Total	386.8	44
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	35.8	110
Rushing	176.2	95
Passing	276.7	116
Total	452.8	112
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 4	+ 0.33	40

New to the ACC This Season: A Semblance of Offense

The ACC failed to have a team ranked higher than 50th in total offense last season (Georgia Tech), continuing a troubling trend that dates to the 2004 expansion season.

While the league has turned out 29 first-round draft choices since then, only four of those have played quarterback, receiver or running back.

Many of those offensive issues can be traced to the lack of proven quarterbacks. With eight full-time starting quarterbacks returning, led by Wake Forest's Riley Skinner, NC State's Russell Wilson and Duke's Thaddeus Lewis, the league is finally flush with experience and talent under center.

And that talent extends beyond pure passers — such as Georgia Tech's Josh Nesbitt, who directs a triple-option attack that should be more dangerous in its second season.

Virginia Tech's Tyrod Taylor and FSU's Christian Ponder are run-pass threats, much like Wilson. So, too is Virginia's Jameel Sewell, who returns after a one-year absence, Boston College's Dominique Davis, and Clemson's Willy Korn.

In what has been a league devoid of playmakers at quarterback in recent seasons — save for BC's Matt Ryan — there's now no shortage of them.

ATLANTIC DIVISION

Florida State has made significant offensive inroads in the two seasons since Bobby Bowden revamped his offensive staff. Under coach-in-waiting Jimbo Fisher's direction, the Seminoles rediscovered their running game and produced the ACC's top-scoring program (33.4 points per game).

With eight starters returning, including the entire line, FSU appears to have the firepower to claim its first division title since 2005.

The road to the top of the division, however, might well go through Wake Forest. The Demon Deacons haven't won 28 games and an ACC title over the past three seasons by accident.

The return of fourth-year starting quarterback Riley Skinner — one of nine offensive starters — should keep them in the hunt again, providing they can replace the likes of Aaron Curry and Alphonso Smith.

Clemson failed to get it done as the favorite last season, which led to Tommy Bowden's midseason exit and the promotion of Dabo Swinney. The Tigers don't have the offensive arsenal of a year ago, but they do have tailback/returner C.J. Spiller, an improved offensive line and eight defensive starters to keep them in the mix.

The fashionable pick to make a big move in the Atlantic is NC State, where third-year coach Tom O'Brien saw his team close with four consecutive regular-season

ACC Picks

Atlantic	GOOD NEWS	BAD NEWS	OUR CALL
1. FSU	Christian Ponder, ACC's top offensive line should keep the ball moving.	Six new defensive starters; brutal schedule includes 11 bowl teams.	'Noles appear ready to build on raised expectations and its 9-4 mark from last season.
2. Wake Forest	Deacs expect to win; QB Riley Skinner, nine offensive starters should help.	Aaron Curry, Alphonso Smith and Sam Swank will be sorely missed.	With 28 wins in three seasons, Jim Grobe's team is a proven commodity.
3. Clemson	C.J. Spiller returns behind shored up OL; defensive front should dominate.	The Tigers break in a new quarterback, face more difficult schedule.	If Dabo Swinney can settle the QB spot, Tigers have contending talent.
4. NC State	Confidence soaring after QB Russell Wilson directed four-win run to bowl.	Wolfpack are paper-thin on both lines; face Wake, BC and FSU on road.	Tom O'Brien has the 'Pack on the rise, but contention comes in 2010.
5. Boston College	Eagles return 16 starters, which should help Frank Spaziani's transition.	The QB position is unsettled; new offense might not mesh with personnel.	A suspect passing game could put too much pressure on LB Mark Herzlich and the defense.
6. Maryland	QB Chris Turner and RB Da'Rel Scott key offense; P Travis Baltz can change field.	Loss of three offensive linemen, seven defensive starters will take toll.	Ralph Friedgen has track record for defying odds, but these are long ones.
Coastal			
1. Virginia Tech	QB Tyrod Taylor, talented backfield, team with top returning defense.	Passing game questions; daunting early slate beginning with Alabama.	Two-time defending league champions pair talent, with find-a-way track record.
2. Georgia Tech	Nine starters return (more polished) for confounding option offense.	Top three defensive linemen are now playing on Sundays.	Familiarity, favorable home slate should lead to 10-win mark.
3. North Carolina	ACC-best nine defensive starters return; talent base improved.	Loss of top three receivers will limit T.J. Yates' aerial options.	Tar Heels are coming on and should be ready for late date with Hokies.
4. Miami	QB Jacory Harris ready to lead experienced offense; defense a year older.	Two new coordinators will require time for adjustments.	Randy Shannon could be on the hot seat if Hurricanes don't step up.
5. Virginia	Apparent good choices at QB; TB Mikell Simpson runs behind four returning OL starters.	Offensive skilled talent is unproven; the linebacking corps was gutted.	If coach Al Groh turns new OC Gregg Brandon loose, Cavs will be thinking bowl.
6. Duke	Re'quan Boyette's return helps run game; Thaddeus Lewis can sling it with best.	Losing six starters from both sides of the ball is problematic.	Shoring up the offensive line could lead to six wins for Cutcliffe's squad.

Lindy's 2009 ALL-ACC Team

OFFENSE - First Team

QB	Riley Skinner	Sr.	Wake Forest
RB	Jonathan Dwyer	Jr.	Georgia Tech
RB	C.J. Spiller	Sr.	Clemson
WR	Jacoby Ford	Sr.	Clemson
WR	Demaryius Thomas	Jr.	Georgia Tech
TE	Greg Boone	Sr.	Virginia Tech
C	Ryan McMahon	Jr.	Florida State
OL	Rodney Hudson	Jr.	Florida State
OL	Thomas Austin	Sr.	Clemson
OL	Chris DeGeare	Sr.	Wake Forest
OL	Jason Fox	Sr.	Miami
AP	T.J. Graham	So.	NC State
PK	Matt Bosher	Jr.	Miami

DEFENSE - First Team

DL	Jason Worilds	Jr.	Virginia Tech
DL	Derrick Morgan	Jr.	Georgia Tech
DL	Vince Oghobaase	Sr.	Duke
DL	Marvin Austin	Jr.	North Carolina
LB	Mark Herzlich	Sr.	Boston College
LB	Nate Irving	Jr.	NC State
LB	Dekoda Watson	Sr.	Florida State
DB	Ras-I Dowling	Jr.	Virginia
DB	Patrick Robinson	Sr.	Florida State
DB	Kam Chancellor	Sr.	Virginia Tech
DB	Morgan Burnett	Jr.	Georgia Tech
P	Travis Baltz	Jr.	Maryland

OFFENSE - Second Team

QB	Russell Wilson	So.	NC State
RB	Da'Rel Scott	Jr.	Maryland
RB	Darren Evans	So.	Virginia Tech
WR	Rich Gunnell	Sr.	Boston College
WR	Owen Spencer	Jr.	NC State
TE	Zack Pianalto	Jr.	North Carolina
C	Matt Tenant	Sr.	Boston College
OL	Cord Howard	Sr.	Georgia Tech
OL	Sergio Render	Sr.	Virginia Tech
OL	Andrew Datko	So.	Florida State
OL	Anthony Castonzo	Jr.	Boston College
AP	Torrey Smith	So.	Maryland
PK	Josh Czajkowski	Jr.	NC State

DEFENSE - Second Team

DL	Willie Young	Sr.	NC State
DL	Ricky Sapp	Sr.	Clemson
DL	Alan-Michael Cash	Sr.	NC State
DL	John Graves	Jr.	Virginia Tech
LB	Alex Wujciak	Jr.	Maryland
LB	Quan Sturdivant	Jr.	North Carolina
LB	Vincent Rey	Sr.	Duke
DB	Kendrick Burney	Jr.	North Carolina
DB	Stephan Virgil	Sr.	Virginia Tech
DB	Deunta Williams	Jr.	North Carolina
DB	Wes Davis	Jr.	Boston College
P	Kevin Jones	Jr.	Duke

wins to gain bowl eligibility behind first-team All-ACC quarterback Russell Wilson, a freshman.

Wilson is among 15 returning starters, which should be enough to prevent the Wolfpack from needing a late push to get bowl eligible.

Boston College has played for the past two ACC titles, but a coaching change — defensive coordinator Frank Spaziani replaces Jeff Jagodzinski — means wholesale changes and likely more responsibility on star linebacker Mark Herzlich and the Eagles' defense.

Maryland is replacing 13 starters, testing its ability to match last season's 8-5 mark.

COASTAL DIVISION

Frank Beamer's two-time defending ACC champion Virginia Tech team is positioned to make it three in a row. The Hokies repeated a year ago with a retooled defense, most of which returns ... and playmaking quarterback Tyrod Taylor is no longer looking over his shoulder.

With an experienced offensive line clearing the way for 1,000-yard rusher Darren Evans, the Hokies are bound to improve on an offense that ranked 11th in the league.

Offense certainly won't be an issue at Georgia Tech, where second-year coach Paul Johnson returns triggerman Josh Nesbitt and ACC rushing leader Jonathan Dwyer. With a year of polishing and an influx of talent, the run-based option offense should operate smoother than ever.

Still, the Yellow Jackets must replace three defensive line starters to join returning end Derrick Morgan.

If North Carolina is to make a serious push for its first division title, it will likely come from the defense, which returns nine starters. Quarterback T.J. Yates, however, needs help from a cast of unproven receivers to balance the offense.

Miami coach Randy Shannon brought in two new coordinators to help get the young Hurricanes up to speed. Offensive coordinator Mark Whipple, who tutored Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethelisberger, will try to mold sophomore Jacory Harris into a winner. The defensive front seven should be stout.

Second-year Duke coach David Cutcliffe might have the Blue Devils challenging for a bowl berth after logging four wins in 2008. Senior quarterback Thaddeus Lewis will have to handle most of the load, with linebacker Vincent Rey filling a similar role on defense.

Virginia coach Al Groh has turned the offense over to spread guru Gregg Brandon, who has intriguing talent at quarterback.

— Bob Thomas

Most Valuable Player

C.J. Spiller
RB/KR/PR, Clemson

Offensive Player of the Year

Jonathan Dwyer
RB, Georgia Tech

Defensive Player of the Year

Mark Herzlich
LB, Boston College

Newcomer of the Year

Ryan Williams
RB/KR, Virginia Tech

HONOR ROLL

Most Accurate Passer	Riley Skinner	Wake Forest
Strongest Arm	Thaddeus Lewis	Duke
Best Scrambler	Tyrod Taylor	Virginia Tech
Coolest in the Clutch	Riley Skinner, QB	Wake Forest
Toughest to Bring Down	Jonathan Dwyer, RB	Georgia Tech
Best Hands	Danny Coale, WR	Virginia Tech
Most Dangerous Deep Threat	Jacoby Ford, WR	Clemson
Best Pass Blocker	Jason Fox, OT	Miami
Best Run Blocker	Rodney Hudson, OG	Florida State
Best Pass Rusher	Jason Worilds, DE	Virginia Tech
Best Cover Corner	Ras-I Dowling	Virginia
Special Teams Demon	C.J. Spiller	Clemson

The Big Ones

Sept. 3	
South Carolina at NC State	Wolfpack QB Russell Wilson seeks revenge for 34-0 loss in 2008.
Sept. 5	
Alabama vs. Virginia Tech (ATL)	Hokies try to avoid getting rolled by Tide (like Clemson did).
Maryland at Cal	Terps pulled out classic win against Golden Bears in 2008.
Sept. 7	
Miami at Florida State	Primetime slot for past-prime national championship contenders.
Sept. 10	
Clemson at Georgia Tech	Always entertaining and right down to the wire.
Sept. 12	
Stanford at Wake Forest	Bi-coastal clash of ambitious programs.
North Carolina at Connecticut	Huskies provide solid road test for on-the-move Tar Heels.
Sept. 17	
Georgia Tech at Miami	Loser must shift into Coastal Division chase mode.
Sept. 19	
Duke at Kansas	If this were basketball, it might be a classic (still, it's not bad).
East Carolina at North Carolina	In-state clash often provides surprises.
Nebraska at Virginia Tech	Big Red makes rare Eastern road trip.
Sept. 26	
South Florida at Florida State	Seminoles' coaching staff wanted no part of this game.
Miami at Virginia Tech	Never a testosterone shortage in this pairing.
Rutgers at Maryland	Pivotal match-up that also has recruiting ramifications.
North Carolina at Georgia Tech	Tar Heels' defensive experience is critical vs. Tech's offense.
Oct. 3	
Oklahoma at Miami	Sooners will provide UM defense with a mid-term mark.
NC State at Wake Forest	Pairing of ACC's top quarterbacks adds Atlantic intrigue.
Oct. 10	
Georgia Tech at Florida State	Seminoles still trying to solve Jackets' triple-option.
Oct. 17	
Wake Forest at Clemson	Tigers were embarrassed in Bowden's 2008 swan song.
Oct. 29	
North Carolina at Virginia Tech	A likely elimination game in the Coastal race.
Oct. 31	
NC State at Florida State	Darkhorse Wolfpack has troubled Seminoles in the past.
Nov. 7	
Florida State at Clemson	Let's call it Da-Bowl at Death Valley.
Nov. 14	
Florida State at Wake Forest	The Deacs can't possibly beat FSU four times in a row?
Nov. 28	
North Carolina at NC State	Rivals on the rise playing for higher stakes now.
Dec. 5	
ACC Championship (Tampa)	This game is moving to Charlotte, N.C., in 2010.

TYROD TAYLOR

Photo by Tomasso DeRosa

Bowl Connections

ACC Champion BCS

(national title game if ranked #1 or #2, otherwise Orange)

ACC #2 Gator vs. Big East/Big 12/ND
ACC #3 Chick-fil-A vs. SEC
ACC #4 Champs Sports vs. Big Ten
ACC #5 Music City vs. SEC
ACC #6 Meineke Car Care vs. Big East
ACC #7 Emerald vs. Pac-10
ACC #8 EagleBank vs. U.S. military academy
ACC #9 GMAC vs. MAC

Top 10 NFL Talent

1. Mark Herzlich	LB	Sr.	Boston College	ACC's Defensive POY has size, range, nose for ball.
2. C.J. Spiller	RB	Sr.	Clemson	Electric talent compares favorably to Reggie Bush.
3. Jason Fox	OT	Sr.	Miami	Four-year starter has frame, athleticism NFL likes.
4. Willie Young	DE	Sr.	NC State	Productive edge rush specialist set for breakout.
5. Kam Chancellor	S	Sr.	Virginia Tech	Rangy, big-hitter with freakish athletic skills.
6. Vince Oghobaase	DT	Sr.	Duke	Mammoth run stuffer would flourish at NG in 3-4.
7. Dekoda Watson	LB	Sr.	Florida State	Playmaker nearly came out each of last two seasons.
8. Patrick Robinson	CB	Sr.	Florida State	Big corner has on-the-ball skills NFL teams covet.
9. Stephan Virgil	CB	Sr.	Virginia Tech	Productive veteran has flown under publicity radar.
10. Javarris James	RB	Sr.	Miami	Low-mileage back with outstanding blood lines.

By Mike Farrell | Rivals.com

1. FLORIDA STATE: The Seminoles brought in the league's top class, thanks to five-star prospects such as Jacobbi McDaniel at defensive tackle and Greg Reid at cornerback. There's plenty of skill-position talent on both sides of the ball.

2. NORTH CAROLINA: Butch Davis again proved he's one of the top recruiters and that he has one of the top recruiting staffs in the nation. The Tar Heels signed 29 prospects, led by superstar defensive end Donte Moss and game-breaking wide receiver Jheranie Boyd.

3. MIAMI: The Hurricanes only signed 19 prospects, but the quality still makes it an elite haul. While they lost out on running back Bryce Brown, don't feel too bad for Randy Shannon. This class should help Miami continue to rebuild, thanks to in-state standouts Ray Ray Armstrong, Lamar Miller and Brandon McGee.

4. VIRGINIA TECH: Frank Beamer and his staff rode the momentum of their ACC championship into February, bringing in another solid crop of talent to Blacksburg. There are plenty of athletic, versatile prospects with the ability to play numerous positions. The group is led by wide receiver/tight end Logan Thomas and running back David Wilson.

5. MARYLAND: Ralph Friedgen and his staff continue to bring in top talent from the mid-Atlantic region, particularly from their state. Defensive ends DeOnte Arnett and David Mackall will make the Terps tough in the trenches for years to come, and Maryland got a lot of help at running back.

6. VIRGINIA: In spite of a rough season on the field, Virginia again signed a class good enough for middle-of-the-pack status in the ACC. The offensive line will receive a big boost, as six prospects signed. That group is led by tackle Morgan Moses, who could be the next Eugene Monroe for the Cavs.

7. CLEMSON: A coaching change always puts a team behind the eight ball in recruiting, but Clemson still did well despite only 12 signings. Tajh Boyd could be a franchise quarterback, and Malliciah Goodman is a future star along the defensive line. Look for a much bigger haul in the Class of 2010. Dabo Swinney showed he can recruit.

8. GEORGIA TECH: Paul Johnson should have plenty of defensive talent to work with once this group reaches Atlanta. He hopes that in Jordan Luallen or David Sims, he has found his triple-option quarterback of the future. Tackle J.C. Lanier eventually could anchor the defense.

9. DUKE: David Cutcliffe and his staff put together the most surprising class in the ACC. The Blue Devils landed big-time talents such as defensive tackle John Drew and running back Desmond Scott — who previously were committed to Georgia Tech and Rutgers, respectively.

10. NORTH CAROLINA STATE: The Wolfpack signed 27 prospects, and while the overall star power of the group isn't through the roof, there's plenty of reason for excitement. NC State signed five quality defensive tackles, and defensive back Jarvis Byrd should compete for early playing time.

11. WAKE FOREST: Jim Grobe signed 23 prospects, and each will — in all likelihood — take a redshirt year. That is the standard plan in Winston-Salem. The Demon Deacons continued to make in-roads into Florida, signing six from the state.

12. BOSTON COLLEGE: Yet another coaching change hurt the Eagles, who need to have a strong recruiting effort in 2010. Defensive tackle Dillon Quinn should help replenish the talent level with B.J. Raji and Ron Brace off to the NFL.

TOP 20 INCOMING RECRUITS

RK	NAME	HT/WT	POS	HOMETOWN/SCHOOL	COLLEGE
1.	Ray Ray Armstrong	6-4/218	ATH	Sanford (Fla.) Seminole	Miami
2.	Jacobbi McDaniel	6-0/267	DT	Madison (Fla.) Madison County	Florida State
3.	Donte Moss	6-4/235	DE	Jacksonville (N.C.) Northside	North Carolina
4.	Greg Reid	5-9/175	DB	Valdosta (Ga.) Lowndes	Florida State
5.	Willie Downs	6-2/192	ATH	Tallahassee (Fla.) Godby	Florida State
6.	Malliciah Goodman	6-4/255	DE	Florence (S.C.) West Florence	Clemson
7.	David Wilson	5-11/192	RB	Danville (Va.) George Washington	Virginia Tech
8.	Jheranie Boyd	6-2/184	WR	Gastonia (N.C.) Ashbrook	North Carolina
9.	Morgan Moses	6-7/347	OL	Richmond (Va.) Meadowbrook	Virginia
10.	Tajh Boyd	6-0/208	QB	Hampton (Va.) Phoebus	Clemson
11.	Rodney Smith	6-6/202	WR	Miami Archbishop Carroll	Florida State
12.	Demonte McAllister	6-3/263	DE	Tampa Alonso	Florida State
13.	Logan Thomas	6-6/233	TE	Lynchburg (Va.) Brookville	Virginia Tech
14.	Bryce McNeal	6-2/170	WR	Minneapolis Breck	Clemson
15.	Lamar Miller	5-11/205	RB	Miami Killian	Miami
16.	Donavan Tate	6-2/205	ATH	Cartersville (Ga.) High	North Carolina
17.	Brandon McGee	5-11/186	DB	Plantation (Fla.) High	Miami
18.	Brandon Washington	6-5/330	OL	New Berlin (N.Y.) Milford Academy	Miami
19.	DeOnte Armett	6-4/243	DE	Forestville (Md.) Forestville Military Academy	Maryland
20.	Dillon Quinn	6-6/295	DT	Pawling (N.Y.) Trinity Pawling	Boston College

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR:
Athlete Ray Ray Armstrong from Sanford (Fla.) Seminole is headed to Miami, and the future Hurricane saw his stock rise dramatically as the recruiting process progressed. He helped lead his Orlando-area team to the Florida 6A state championship, the first non-south Florida team to win it since 2001. Armstrong (6-4/218) could be a big safety or a linebacker and is the No. 1 athlete in the nation and the No. 2 prospect in Florida.

TOP SLEEPER:
At 5-10, 212 pounds, there will surely be those who doubt the ability of linebacker Julian Burnett from Macon (Ga.) Westside. He should quickly silence those doubters. Burnett runs the 40-yard dash in 4.51 seconds and bench presses an eye-popping 400 pounds. He put together an impressive offer sheet before signing with Georgia Tech.

LIKELY TO BE BEST NFL PLAYER:
It would be tough to argue against Armstrong or Florida State defensive tackle Jacobbi McDaniel, but Jacksonville (N.C.) Northside defensive end Donte Moss may have the most upside of anyone entering the ACC this year. He committed to North Carolina early and could turn into the Heels' best pass-rusher since Julius Peppers.

NO. 1 SIGNING COUP:
Hampton (Va.) Phoebus quarterback Tajh Boyd made Clemson's future look a lot brighter when he committed in late January. He is the No. 4 pro-style quarterback in the nation. Boyd had been committed to West Virginia and Tennessee during the process, but he now is the quarterback of the future in Death Valley.

BIGGEST MISS:
Unfortunately for Clemson, it owns this spot, too. It would have been huge to hold on to five-star safety Craig Loston of Aldine (Texas) Eisenhower, but he eventually signed with LSU. Loston was looking around before Tommy Bowden was shown the door, and Bowden's departure sealed the deal.

BEST RECRUITING STAFF:
You could make a case for Florida State or Miami, but North Carolina's staff did an exceptional job this year. John Blake is, of course, widely known as one of the best recruiters in the country. UNC offensive coordinator John Shoop did a great job with some highly touted prospects this year. Departed linebackers coach Tommy Thigpen (now at Auburn) also was a key to UNC landing the No. 2 class in the ACC.

VIRGINIA TECH HOKIES

NATIONAL RANK 5

ACC rank: 1 | Record: 10-4 | ACC record: 5-3 (T-1st, Coastal) | Stadium: Lane (66,233)

Hokies in A Box

COACH: Frank Beamer — At Virginia Tech: 177-89-2, 22 years; overall: 219-112-4, 28 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bryan Stinespring
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bud Foster
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2008
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 1992
RETURNING STARTERS: 17; 9 offense, 7 defense, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Tyrod Taylor, RB Darren Evans, LT Ed Wang, DE Jason Worilds, CB Stephan Virgil, FS Kam Chancellor
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The offense has as many playmakers as it has had in Beamer's career. The Hokies are two-deep everywhere but quarterback, where Taylor should be ready to shoulder the load after two up-and-down seasons. The defense will always be good, and the secondary is terrific.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: One Taylor injury could send the season spiraling down the rabbit hole. The offensive line is better than it has been since 2005, but it's still a concern. Tech's two inside linebackers are first-year starters.

OFFENSE

The problems of 2008 — an inconsistent line, inexperience at the skill positions and a quarterback situation that stayed in flux — seem to be in the past.

There figures to be fewer worries — as long as Tyrod Taylor avoids the ankle injuries that plagued his first two seasons. The junior quarterback has the live feet to frustrate any pass rush and is working on improving his accuracy as a passer, eliminating a nettlesome hitch in his motion during the offseason.

He needs to boost his career throwing percentage of 55 percent, however.

He is surrounded by playmakers, plus a line that has more than 70 combined starts and appears to be more athletic than it has been in the past three seasons.

Darren Evans rushed for more than 1,200 yards as a freshman, coming on strong in the last six games. Behind him is electrifying freshman Ryan Williams, who wowed in the spring game, when he rolled up 151 total yards.

Add Taylor's 700-plus yards to the ground attack and this is a team that might not have to throw much to win. But the Hokies can pass. They have three sophomore wideouts — Danny Coale, Jarrett Boykin, Dyrell Roberts — who combined for more than 80 catches last season. Tight end Greg Boone gives them a boost after making 22 grabs.

DEFENSE

Tech's starting unit could be as fast as any this program has fielded, with the main strength being the secondary, despite the departure of cornerback Macho Harris.

His cherished boundary corner spot has been taken by Stephan Virgil, a revelation last year when he rose from obscurity to pick off a half-dozen passes and become a big hitter in the mold of Brandon Flowers.

Filling Virgil's shoes at field corner is Rashad Carmichael, who beat out Cris Hill in the spring but will have to play well early against opponents that will aim their passing games at him.

Senior Kam Chancellor, who struggled for most of 2008 with his conversion to free safety, appears to have fully grasped the spot.

Second-team All-ACC end Jason Worilds and tackle John Graves, both high motor guys who have disruptive quickness, will lead the line. Defensive tackle Cordarrow Thompson dropped weight and lived up to the coaches' expectations in 2008.

At linebacker, Cody Grimm is back on the outside after a breakout 2008 in which he was third on the team in tackles and tied for second in sacks.

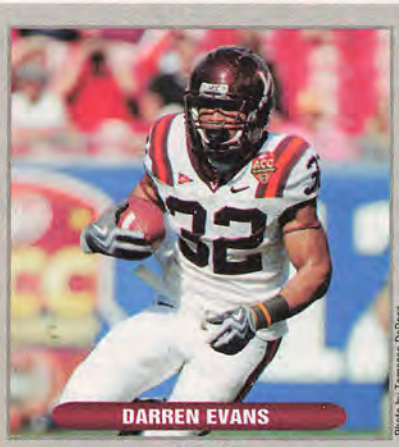
SPECIAL TEAMS

Placekicker Matt Waldron will try to become the third straight Virginia Tech senior to score more than 100 points in his only year as the starter.

Punter Brent Bowden is back for a third year, although he dropped off in 2008 to 40.4 yards per kick. Opponents returned three of his boots for touchdowns and blocked two others, a baffling turn of events for Frank Beamer, a longtime guru of special teams play.

OVERVIEW

The season could come down to three words: Keep Taylor intact. If the injury-prone QB can stay out of the training room and on the field, this is the ACC's best team. With a September schedule that includes Alabama and Nebraska, the Hokies will have a real chance for a national impact before the leaves turn.



DARREN EVANS

Photo by Tomasso DeRosa

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Tyrod Taylor***	**6-1**	**216**	**Jr.**
	Ju-Ju Clayton	6-0	215	Fr.
RB	**Darren Evans***	**6-0**	**213**	**So.**
	Ryan Williams	5-9	205	Fr.
FB	**Kenny Jefferson***	**5-9**	**220**	**Sr.**
	Kenny Younger	5-11	214	Jr.
WR	**Jarrett Boykin***	**6-2**	**213**	**So.**
	Xavier Boyce	6-4	223	Fr.
WR	**Danny Coale***	**6-0**	**205**	**So.**
	Dyrell Roberts	6-1	192	So.
TE	**Greg Boone***	**6-3**	**287**	**Sr.**
	Andre Smith	6-4	267	Jr.
LT	**Ed Wang***	**6-5**	**301**	**Sr.**
	Nick Becton	6-5	292	Fr.
LG	**Sergio Render***	**6-3**	**319**	**Sr.**
	Greg Nosal	6-6	285	So.
C	Beau Warren	6-3	277	Jr.
	Michael Via	6-6	277	Fr.
RG	Jaymes Brooks	6-2	300	So.
	Vinston Painter	6-5	310	Fr.
RT	**Blake DeChristopher***	**6-5**	**303**	**So.**
	Andrew Lanier	6-5	274	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Nekos Brown	6-2	252	Sr.
	Steven Friday	6-4	229	Jr.
DT	**John Graves***	**6-3**	**275**	**Jr.**
	Demetrius Taylor	6-0	262	Sr.
DT	**Cordarrow Thompson***	**6-2**	**308**	**Sr.**
	Antoine Hopkins	6-0	295	Fr.
DE	**Jason Worilds***	**6-2**	**240**	**Jr.**
	Isaiah Hamlette	6-4	242	Fr.
LB	**Cody Grimm***	**5-11**	**202**	**Sr.**
	Cam Martin	6-1	215	Sr.
LB	Barquell Rivers	6-0	230	So.
	Bruce Taylor	6-2	251	Fr.
LB	Jake Johnson	6-1	229	So.
	Quillie Odom	6-1	225	So.
CB	Rashad Carmichael	5-10	192	Jr.
	Cris Hill	5-11	185	So.
CB	**Stephan Virgil***	**5-11**	**189**	**Sr.**
	Eddie Whitley	6-0	187	So.
ROV	**Dorian Porch***	**5-11**	**212**	**Sr.**
	Davon Morgan	6-0	196	Jr.
FS	**Kam Chancellor***	**6-4**	**226**	**Sr.**
	Lorenzo Williams	6-2	212	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Matt Waldron	5-11	190	Sr.
P	**Brent Bowden***	**6-3**	**201**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	vs. Alabama (Atlanta)
Sept. 12	MARSHALL
Sept 19	NEBRASKA
Sept. 26	MIAMI
Oct. 3	at Duke
Oct. 10	BOSTON COLLEGE
Oct. 17	at Georgia Tech
Oct. 29	NORTH CAROLINA
Nov. 5	at East Carolina
Nov. 14	at Maryland
Nov. 21	NC STATE
Nov. 28	at Virginia

2008 Results

	(10-4, 5-3)	
L	vs. East Carolina	22-27
W	FURMAN	24-7
W	GEORGIA TECH	20-17
W	at North Carolina	20-17
W	at Nebraska	35-30
W	WESTERN KENTUCKY	27-13
L	at Boston College	23-28
L	at Florida State	20-30
W	MARYLAND	23-13
L	at Miami	14-16
W	DUKE	14-3
W	VIRGINIA	17-14
	ACC Championship Game	
W	vs. Boston College	30-12
	Orange Bowl	
W	vs. Cincinnati	20-7

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	22.1	90
Rushing	174.4	35
Passing	129.1	111
Total	303.4	103
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	16.7	9
Rushing	104.4	14
Passing	175.0	16
Total	279.4	7
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 14	+ 1.00	10

GEORGIA TECH YELLOW JACKETS

NATIONAL RANK 16

ACC rank: 2 | Record: 9-4 | ACC record: 5-3 (T-1st, Coastal) | Stadium: Bobby Dodd (55,000)

Yellow Jackets in A Box

COACH: Paul Johnson — At Georgia Tech: 9-4, 1 year; overall: 116-43, 12 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Paul Johnson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dave Wommack
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1998, co-champions
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 1996
RETURNING STARTERS: 19; 9 offense, 8 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYER TO WATCH: QB Josh Nesbitt, FB Jonathan Dwyer, HB Roddy Jones, WR Demaryius Thomas, DE Derrick Morgan, LB Kyle Jackson, S Morgan Burnett, CB Mario Butler.
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Points are a given in Johnson's offense, particularly with veterans at every offensive skill position. The Yellow Jackets have more quality linebackers than linebacker spots, and a great safety in Burnett.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: A disruptive defensive line offset plenty of on-the-job training elsewhere on defense last year. The Jackets must replace three of those four defensive linemen. The kicking game is a major source of angst for Johnson, and kicker/punter Scott Blair will be lucky to hold on to his job.

OFFENSE

Georgia Tech ranked among the best rushing teams in the country in Paul Johnson's first season and among the worst passing teams.

The plan this fall? Throw more. What else?

The Yellow Jackets ranked 116th out of 119 teams in passing, largely because of the scheme overhaul. Johnson's predecessor, Chan Gailey, ran a pro-style offense, so the option was totally foreign to the majority of the players.

Johnson kept things basic as a result, and with the success of fullback Jonathan Dwyer, the ACC's leading rusher, and quarterback Josh Nesbitt, Georgia Tech didn't need to throw.

Johnson knows league opponents will start to catch up with the offense now that they've faced it. Hence the extra work on the passing attack in the spring.

Nesbitt's skill-set, and wide receiver Demaryius Thomas, give Johnson reason to air it out.

Nesbitt is a big quarterback — 215 pounds — with an even bigger arm. He completed just 43 percent of his passes last season but averaged 15 yards per completion.

Thomas, meanwhile, has quietly drawn comparisons in the past two seasons to former Georgia Tech star wide receiver Calvin Johnson.

For all the offense's big-play potential, the make-or-break players this fall will be the linemen. Georgia Tech returns three starters up front, but expects large contributions from newcomers as Johnson looks for more agile blockers.

Johnson has recruited seven offensive linemen in his two classes at Georgia Tech.

DEFENSE

Credit Georgia Tech's defense for a big reason why the Yellow Jackets are coming off a surprising nine-win season.

Behind a veteran line, first-year coordinator Dave Wommack built a Top 25 defense. The Yellow Jackets held four ACC opponents and Mississippi State to 20 points or less and allowed the offense time to jell early in the season.

But the offense will need to carry the defense this fall. Tech is experienced at linebacker and in the secondary but must replace NFL draft picks Michael Johnson, Vance Walker and Darryl Richard up front.

The lone returnee on the defensive line is a star in the making in Derrick Morgan. Johnson, one of the most disruptive pass rushers in the country, overshadowed Morgan, but not any more. Morgan had seven sacks and 9.5 tackles for loss.

Where Johnson was lean and quick, Morgan is thick — 275 pounds — and explosive. Morgan should draw most of the blocking attention.

Supporting Morgan will be a talented group of linebackers. Four players with extensive experience return, and Kyle Jackson and Brad Jefferson are versatile enough to play inside and outside.

Toss in strong safety Morgan Burnett, an All-America candidate, and Georgia Tech has a good tackling defense.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The kicking game seems slated for an overhaul in the preseason. Scott Blair is the returning starter at placekicker and punter, but he faces serious challenges for both jobs this fall.

Blair missed three field goals in the spring game and fumbled a punt. He had coach Paul Johnson strip the ball from him on a punt and benched him.

OVERVIEW

Georgia Tech's success in Johnson's first year sent expectations into orbit for 2009. If Nesbitt can manage the passing game well enough to open up the offense, the Yellow Jackets should score enough points to offset the uncertainty on defense and make Tech an ACC favorite.

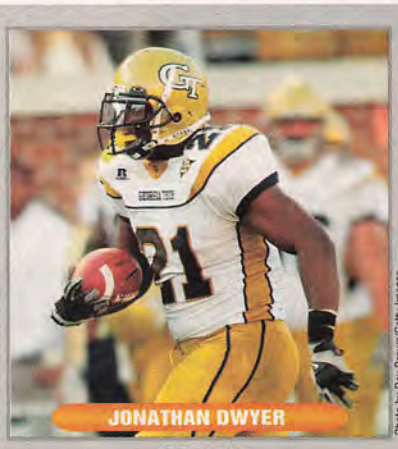

JONATHAN DWYER

Photo by Rex Brown/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Josh Nesbitt***	**6-1**	**215**	**Jr.**
	Jaybo Shaw	6-1	180	So.
RB	**Jonathan Dwyer***	**6-0**	**235**	**Jr.**
	Richard Watson	6-1	234	Fr.
RB	**Lucas Cox***	**6-0**	**245**	**Jr.**
	Anthony Allen	6-0	228	Jr.
RB	**Roddy Jones***	**5-9**	**192**	**So.**
	Embry Peeples	5-10	176	So.
WR	**Demaryius Thomas***	**6-3**	**229**	**Jr.**
	Zach Fisher	6-2	196	So.
WR	**Tyler Melton***	**6-0**	**205**	**So.**
	Kevin Cone	6-2	206	So.
LT	Brad Sellers	6-2	250	Sr.
	Phil Smith	6-6	290	Fr.
LG	**Cord Howard***	**6-5**	**300**	**Sr.**
	Omoregie Uzzi	6-3	304	Fr.
C	**Dan Voss***	**6-4**	**300**	**Sr.**
	Sean Bedford	6-1	267	Jr.
RG	**Joseph Gilbert***	**6-4**	**284**	**So.**
	Nick McRae	6-4	293	Fr.
RT	Austin Barrick	6-4	254	Jr.
	Nick Claytor	6-6	286	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Derrick Morgan***	**6-4**	**275**	**Jr.**
	Emmanuel Dieke	6-6	243	Fr.
DT	Ben Anderson	6-6	274	Jr.
	T.J. Barnes	6-7	353	Fr.
DT	Jason Peters	6-4	272	So.
	Logan Walls	6-2	290	So.
DE	Robert Hall	6-3	254	Jr.
	Anthony Egbuniwe	6-4	256	Jr.
LB	**Anthony Barnes***	**6-3**	**234**	**Jr.**
	Mario Edwards	6-1	210	Jr.
LB	**Kyle Jackson***	**6-0**	**228**	**So.**
	Brad Jefferson	6-2	236	Jr.
LB	**Sedric Griffin***	**5-11**	**230**	**Sr.**
	Steven Sylvester	6-2	236	So.
CB	**Mario Butler***	**6-1**	**181**	**Jr.**
	Jerrard Tarrant	6-0	193	So.
CB	**Rashaad Reid***	**5-10**	**186**	**So.**
	Michael Peterson	5-11	195	So.
SS	**Morgan Burnett***	**6-1**	**210**	**Jr.**
	Cooper Taylor	6-4	200	So.
FS	**Dominique Reese***	**5-11**	**195**	**Jr.**
	Kamaron Riley	6-2	203	Fr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Scott Blair***	**6-0**	**198**	**Jr.**
P	**Scott Blair***	**6-0**	**198**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	JACKSONVILLE STATE
Sept. 10	CLEMSON
Sept. 17	at Miami
Sept. 26	NORTH CAROLINA
Oct. 3	at Mississippi State
Oct. 10	at Florida State
Oct. 17	VIRGINIA TECH
Oct. 24	at Virginia
Oct. 31	at Vanderbilt
Nov. 7	WAKE FOREST
Nov. 14	at Duke
Nov. 28	GEORGIA

2008 Results

	(9-4, 5-3)	
W	JACKSONVILLE STATE	41-14
W	at Boston College	19-16
L	at Virginia Tech	17-20
W	MISSISSIPPI STATE	38-7
W	DUKE	27-0
W	GARDNER-WEBB	10-7
W	at Clemson	21-17
L	VIRGINIA	17-24
W	FLORIDA STATE	31-28
L	at North Carolina	7-28
W	MIAMI	41-23
W	at Georgia	45-42
	Chick-fil-A Bowl	
L	vs. LSU	3-38

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.4	74
Rushing	273.2	4
Passing	99.2	116
Total	372.5	50
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	20.3	28
Rushing	120.3	24
Passing	193.2	41
Total	313.5	25
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 2	+ 0.15	49

FLORIDA STATE SEMINOLES

NATIONAL RANK 18

ACC rank: 3 | Record: 9-4 | ACC record: 5-3 (T-1st, Atlantic) | Stadium: Doak Campbell Stadium (82,300)

Seminoles in A Box

COACH: Bobby Bowden — At Florida State: 309-91-4, 33 years; overall: 382-123-4 overall, 43 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jimbo Fisher
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mickey Andrews
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2005
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 1981
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 8 offense, 5 defense
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Christian Ponder, TB Jermaine Thomas, WR Bert Reed, OG Rodney Hudson, CB Patrick Robinson, LB Dekoda Watson, TE Caz Piurowski
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The offensive line returns intact, giving FSU hope of running the ball for a change. Thomas reminds FSU of Leon Washington; not a bad comparison. The linebackers continue an FSU tradition of speed and mean streaks.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Recruiting misses have hurt the most on the defensive line. There is no dominating rush end or gap-filling tackle. The secondary, with few proven performers, is another concern. There are also questions in the kicking game.

OFFENSE

Can quarterback Christian Ponder do it? He'll begin without anyone in the rear-view mirror, since heralded redshirt freshman E.J. Manuel missed most of the spring with a broken finger.

The Seminoles wanted to test Manuel throughout spring scrimmages. Now, he'll be further behind Ponder in knowing the offense.

Ponder showed flashes of brilliance last year to affirm the coaches' decision to play him over senior Drew Weatherford. But, like Weatherford, he was often better in the film room and in practice than when pass rushers crowded his space.

He threw nearly as many interceptions (13) as touchdowns (14), but he was also the first FSU quarterback to rush for 400 yards since Charlie Ward had 504 in 1992.

The wide receiver corps is problematic. Two thirds of this group has either been suspended or arrested, or both, during the past 18 months. Self-discipline off the field is the first priority; finding or developing a playmaker is the second.

Bert Reed appears the most likely to meet the need on the field. The top returning receiver, Taiwan Easterling, missed all of spring with an injury.

The line will be the strength of the offense. Under third-year assistant Rick Trickett, the line has developed a toughness it lacked in recent seasons.

Sophomore Jermaine Thomas is easily the best tailback. He shows a knack for breaking tackles and an ability to emerge from a pile to bust loose for big plays.

DEFENSE

The top player on defense is cornerback Patrick Robinson, who was named the team MVP of spring drills.

He joins fellow senior Jamie Robinson (no relation) to give this team a pair of quality players in the secondary. Jamie Robinson, a free safety, is the only other returning FSU defensive back to pick off a pass last year.

Joining the Robinsons are mostly raw players — redshirt freshmen or sophomores with minimal experience. Only senior Korey Mangum, the projected starter at the team's rover position, has significant experience.

The linebacker corps is solid, led by Dekoda Watson. The Seminoles hope senior Markus White can take over at rush end for Everette Brown, who left early and was Florida State's only NFL Draft pick. White had 5.5 tackles for loss last season.

FSU will need freshmen to compete at defensive end.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Florida State will miss dual-purpose kicker Graham Gano. FSU hopes Dustin Hopkins, rated as the No. 1 placekicker prospect by some recruiting services, wins the job after he enrolls over the summer.

Punting duties will fall to sophomore Shawn Powell, who began last season as the punter before Gano was healthy enough to supplant him.

FSU will also miss Michael Ray Garvin, a track speedster, who averaged 30.1 yards per kick return. This is where a true freshman like Willie Downs — or another young player — could help out immediately.

OVERVIEW

With early opponents like BYU, South Florida and Boston College, we'll know in the first month whether the Seminoles are really better or really in trouble. If they can run effectively, and if Ponder can manage the team more consistently, it will take pressure off a suspect defense and prevent reliance on field goals with a rookie kicker.

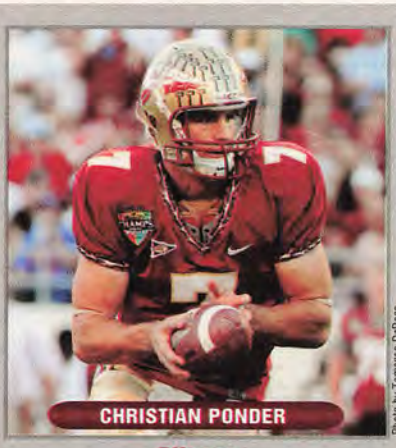

CHRISTIAN PONDER

Photo by Tomasso DeRosa

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Christian Ponder***	**6-2**	**217**	**Jr.**
	E.J. Manuel	6-4	223	Fr.
RB	Jermaine Thomas	6-1	190	So.
	Ty Jones	5-11	203	So.
FB	**Marcus Sims***	**6-0**	**233**	**Sr.**
	Seddrick Holloway	5-10	265	Sr.
WR	Bert Reed	5-11	165	So.
	Jarmon Fortson	6-3	223	So.
WR	Richard Goodman	6-0	191	Sr.
	Rod Owens	6-0	183	Sr.
TE	**Caz Piurowski***	**6-7**	**271**	**Sr.**
	Ja'Baris Little	6-4	226	So.
LT	**Andrew Datko***	**6-6**	**283**	**So.**
	Rhonne Sanderson	6-4	270	So.
LG	**Rodney Hudson***	**6-2**	**285**	**Jr.**
	Rhonne Sanderson	6-4	270	So.
C	**Ryan McMahon***	**6-3**	**282**	**Jr.**
	A.J. Ganguzza	6-3	268	So.
RG	**Will Furlong***	**6-5**	**276**	**So.**
	Brandon Davis	6-2	281	Jr.
RT	**Zebrie Sanders***	**6-5**	**288**	**So.**
	Antwane Greenlee	6-6	293	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Kevin McNeil	6-2	257	Sr.
	Jamar Jackson	6-4	240	So.
DT	**Budd Thacker***	**6-2**	**276**	**Sr.**
	Justin Mincey	6-5	272	Sr.
DT	**Kendrick Stewart***	**6-2**	**271**	**Sr.**
	Everett Dawkins	6-2	258	So.
DE	Markus White	6-4	261	Sr.
	Toshmon Stevens	6-5	228	So.
LB	**Dekoda Watson***	**6-2**	**226**	**Sr.**
	Mister Alexander	6-2	227	Jr.
LB	Kendall Smith	6-1	230	Jr.
	Vince Williams	6-0	245	So.
LB	Nigel Bradham	6-2	235	So.
	Maurice Harris	6-0	212	So.
CB	Ochuko Jenije	5-10	188	Jr.
	Dionte Allen	5-11	172	So.
CB	**Patrick Robinson***	**5-11**	**194**	**Sr.**
	A.J. Alexander	5-11	180	Fr.
SS	Korey Mangum	6-0	202	Sr.
	Terrance Parks	6-1	196	So.
FS	**Jamie Robinson***	**6-2**	**188**	**Sr.**
	Terrance Parks	6-1	196	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Dustin Hopkins	6-2	174	Fr.
P	Shawn Powell	6-5	217	So.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 7	MIAMI
Sept. 12	JACKSONVILLE STATE
Sept. 19	at BYU
Sept. 26	SOUTH FLORIDA
Oct. 3	at Boston College
Oct. 10	GEORGIA TECH
Oct. 22	at North Carolina
Oct. 31	NC STATE
Nov. 7	at Clemson
Nov. 14	at Wake Forest
Nov. 21	MARYLAND
Nov. 28	at Florida

2008 Results

	(9-4, 5-3)	
W	WESTERN CAROLINA	69-0
W	CHATTANOOGA	46-7
L	WAKE FOREST	3-12
W	COLORADO	39-21
W	at Miami	41-39
W	at NC State	26-17
W	VIRGINIA TECH	30-20
L	at Georgia Tech	28-31
W	CLEMSON	41-27
L	BOSTON COLLEGE	17-27
W	at Maryland	37-3
L	FLORIDA	15-45
	Champs Sports Bowl	
W	vs. Wisconsin	42-13

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	33.4	22
Rushing	179.1	33
Passing	192.8	82
Total	371.9	51
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	20.2	26
Rushing	132.5	42
Passing	162.4	6
Total	294.9	15
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 0	+ 0.00	62

NORTH CAROLINA TAR HEELS

NATIONAL RANK 19

ACC rank: 4 | Record: 8-5 | ACC record: 4-4 (T-3rd, Coastal) | Stadium: Kenan Stadium (60,000)

Tar Heels in A Box

COACH: Butch Davis — At UNC: 12-13, 2 years; overall: 63-33, 8 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: John Shoop
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Everett Withers
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1980
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 6 offense, 9 defense, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB T.J. Yates, RB Shaun Draughn, DE Robert Quinn, DT Marvin Austin, LB Quan Sturdivant, S Deunta Williams, LB Bruce Carter, DE E.J. Wilson
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Defense is going to be the name of the game. The D-line is deep; the linebackers are speedy and the best pro prospect on the team might be junior safety Deunta Williams. He is a natural playmaker who will be allowed to roam more this season in search of game-changing moments.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The biggest issue is Yates' durability. The other issues are the inexperience at wide receiver and depth along the offensive line. Carolina lost all its main contributors at receiver. Some incoming freshmen may have to play on the offensive line.

OFFENSE

North Carolina lost its two leading playmakers in wide receivers Hakeem Nicks and Brandon Tate — and a third experienced and productive receiver in Brooks Foster — but quarterback T.J. Yates returns.

There is not much debate about Yates' productivity. His health is the issue. He's been hurt in both of his first two seasons (shoulder, ankle). He sprained his thumb in the spring playing Ultimate Frisbee.

That cost him some offseason training time, but he should be fine for fall camp. As for his backup, incoming freshman Bryn Renner could get a shot.

Shaun Draughn became the main runner last season after playing safety his first season. He gained 828 yards and scored three touchdowns. Ryan Houston is a goal-line and short-yardage terror, while redshirt freshman Jamal Womble is an excellent prospect. His instincts and cutting ability enable him to be an explosive player.

Greg Little is the only experienced wideout. Dwight Jones and Joshua Adams each provide big, fast and inexperienced targets.

The offense's other issue is depth along the line. UNC must replace its starting left guard and tackle, and there is a general lack of backups. Sophomore guard Mike Dykes was expected to be a backup but has given up football because of a nagging knee injury.

DEFENSE

This is the area where the youthful procession the past two seasons should really pay dividends. Not only do the Tar Heels return a league-high nine starters, most of their backups will be back as well.

The coaching staff can rotate 10 players along the line without much of a drop-off in talent. Junior defensive tackle Marvin Austin, because of his former recruiting buzz, might be the biggest name. He and Cam Thomas are 300-pounders in the middle of the line. E.J. Wilson and Robert Quinn look to build off solid 2008 seasons.

Coach Butch Davis struggled to find enough bodies to play linebacker in his first season in 2007, but he now has veterans in Quan Sturdivant and Bruce Carter. A third starter — redshirt freshman Zach Brown — is among the fastest players on the team.

The three starting linebackers have all run 4.55 seconds or faster in the 40-yard dash.

Cornerback is a little thin after Kendric Burney, Charles Brown and Jordan Hemby. But there are plenty of capable players lined up to play safety alongside star Deunta Williams.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Johnny White and Little are excellent on kick returns, but the coaching staff spent a lot of time in the spring working to find the right person to field punts.

New punter Grant Schallock appeared more than capable during the spring game as he boomed kicks with his long leg. The junior is a bit unique for a punter: He's 6-7.

Casey Barth and Jay Wooten will again compete at placekicker.

OVERVIEW

North Carolina is growing up, and this team has only six projected senior starters. This could be a bridge season between last year's eight wins and a huge leap forward in 2010 … or maybe the future is now.

For that to happen, Yates is going to have to stay healthy, while the offensive line and running game develops. If the offense doesn't mess things up, the defense is good enough to make this a special season.

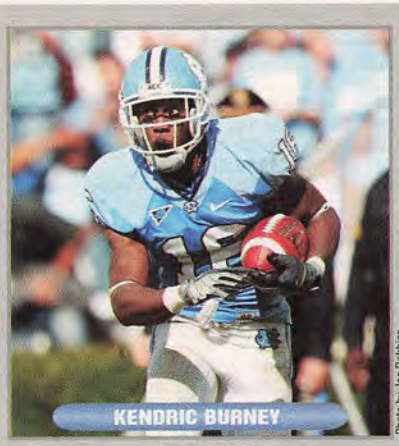

KENDRIC BURNEY

Photo by Joe Robbins

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**T.J. Yates***	**6-3**	**215**	**Jr.**
	Mike Paulus	6-5	215	So.
RB	**Shaun Draughn***	**6-0**	**205**	**Jr.**
	Ryan Houston	6-2	250	Jr.
HB	Ryan Taylor	6-3	240	Sr.
	(FB) Bobby Rome	5-11	245	Sr.
WR	**Greg Little***	**6-3**	**220**	**Jr.**
	Todd Harrelson	6-2	190	Fr.
WR	Dwight Jones	6-4	220	So.
	Joshua Adams	6-4	200	Fr.
TE	Zack Pianalto	6-4	250	Jr.
	Ed Barham	6-3	265	Jr.
LT	**Kyle Jolly***	**6-6**	**300**	**Sr.**
	Carl Gaskins	6-5	295	So.
LG	Aaron Stahl	6-3	290	Sr.
	Jonathan Cooper	6-3	295	Fr.
C	**Lowell Dyer***	**6-4**	**290**	**Sr.**
	Cam Holland	6-2	300	So.
RG	**Alan Pelc***	**6-6**	**325**	**Jr.**
	Jonathan Cooper	6-3	295	Fr.
RT	Mike Ingersoll	6-5	300	Jr.
	Kevin Bryant	6-7	340	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**E.J. Wilson***	**6-2**	**280**	**Sr.**
	Quinton Coples	6-6	245	So.
DT	**Marvin Austin***	**6-3**	**300**	**Jr.**
	Tydreke Powell	6-3	300	So.
DT	**Cam Thomas***	**6-4**	**330**	**Sr.**
	Aleric Mullins	6-3	300	Sr.
DE	**Robert Quinn***	**6-5**	**260**	**So.**
	Michael McAdoo	6-7	245	So.
LB	Zach Brown	6-2	220	Fr.
	Herman Davidson	6-0	215	So.
LB	**Quan Sturdivant***	**6-2**	**235**	**Jr.**
	Ebele Okakpu	6-2	220	So.
LB	**Bruce Carter***	**6-3**	**230**	**Jr.**
	Dion Guy	6-4	225	Fr.
CB	Charles Brown	5-10	200	Jr.
	Jordan Hemby*	**5-10**	**185**	**Sr.**
CB	**Kendric Burney***	**5-9**	**185**	**Jr.**
	LeCount Fantroy	5-11	190	So.
S	Da'Norris Searcy	6-0	200	Jr.
	Matt Merletti	5-11	200	Jr.
S	**Deunta Williams***	**6-2**	**205**	**Jr.**
	Melvin Williams	6-0	195	Sr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Casey Barth***	**5-11**	**170**	**So.**
P	Grant Schallock	6-7	225	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	THE CITADEL
Sept. 12	at Connecticut
Sept. 19	EAST CAROLINA
Sept. 26	at Georgia Tech
Oct. 3	VIRGINIA
Oct. 10	GEORGIA SOUTHERN
Oct. 22	FLORIDA STATE
Oct. 29	at Virginia Tech
Nov. 7	DUKE
Nov. 14	MIAMI
Nov. 21	at Boston College
Nov. 28	at NC State

2008 Results

	(8-5, 4-4)	
W	MCNEESE STATE	35-27
W	at Rutgers	44-12
L	VIRGINIA TECH	17-20
W	at Miami	28-24
W	CONNECTICUT	38-12
W	NOTRE DAME	29-24
L	at Virginia (OT)	13-16
W	BOSTON COLLEGE	45-24
W	GEORGIA TECH	28-7
L	at Maryland	15-17
L	NC STATE	10-41
W	at Duke	28-20
	Meineke Car Care Bowl	
L	vs. West Virginia	30-31

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.7	43
Rushing	122.6	89
Passing	198.8	74
Total	321.4	92
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	21.2	32
Rushing	139.4	56
Passing	226.0	84
Total	365.4	64
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 6	+ 0.46	29

WAKE FOREST DEMON DEACONS

NATIONAL RANK 30

ACC rank: 5 | Record: 8-5 | ACC record: 4-4 (T-3rd, Atlantic) | Stadium: BB&T Field (31,500)

Deacons in A Box

COACH: Jim Grobe — At Wake Forest: 54-44, 8 years; overall: 87-77-1, 14 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Steed Lobotzke
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brad Lambert
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2006
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2005
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 9 offense, 4 defense, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Riley Skinner, RB Josh Adams, RB Brandon Pendergrass, LT Chris DeGeare, NG Boo Robinson, DT John Russell, CB Brandon Ghee
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Skinner gives the Deacons veteran leadership and an accurate arm. The running game gets a boost with the speedy (and healthy) Adams and Pendergrass running behind a veteran line. Robinson and Russell are strong up front on defense.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: There was a significant talent drain on defense, with four Deacons taken in the first four rounds of the NFL Draft. Skinner will have a lot of young, unproven targets at wide receiver. Steady kicker Sam Swank leaves a hole in special teams.

OFFENSE

Everything starts with quarterback Riley Skinner, who enters his senior season as the most accurate passer in ACC history.

He has completed 639 of 949 career passes — a 67.3 completion percentage — throwing for 6,602 yards. He has directed 26 victories — a school record for a Wake quarterback — while leading the Deacons to three straight bowl appearances.

Wake hopes to be more consistent in the running game, a staple of Jim Grobe-coached teams. Speedy backs Josh Adams and Brandon Pendergrass are healthy after battling injuries last year. Adams, who rushed for 953 yards in 2007 was limited to 402 yards on just 122 carries last season.

The running backs will operate behind a veteran line that has a combined 95 career starts. Left tackle Chris DeGeare, who missed last season due to academics, is back to reclaim his starting role.

Grobe said a group of young receivers was the surprise of spring drills, giving Skinner options for a balanced attack despite the loss of the prolific D.J. Boldin, who led the ACC with 81 catches last season.

DEFENSE

The Deacons will use a young, fast defense to try to replace a pair of departed stars in linebacker Aaron Curry, the fourth overall pick in the NFL Draft, and cornerback Alphonso Smith, a second-round draft pick.

Seniors Boo Robinson and John Russell, who missed time in the spring with injuries, will anchor the defensive front. The back seven will not only need to replace Curry and Smith, but two other standouts — linebacker Stanley Arnoux and safety Chip Vaughn. They went in the fourth round of the draft.

Regardless, Grobe says the overall team speed on defense might be the best in his tenure at Wake.

The linebacker corps will feature a deeper rotation, featuring players who can get to the ball. Hunter Haynes and Matt Woodlief have the most experience among the new linebackers.

Senior cornerback Brandon Ghee, hobbled with a knee injury in the spring, looks to provide leadership for an inexperienced secondary.

SPECIAL TEAMS

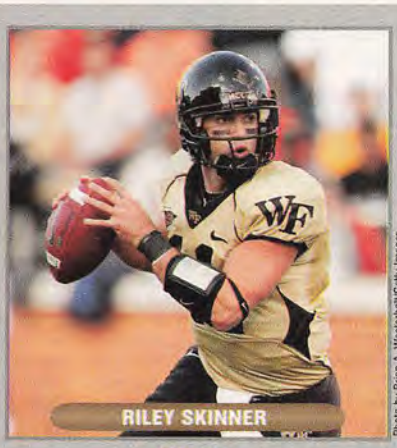
Sam Swank, the school's all-time leading scorer with 334 points, has graduated, opening up competition in the kicking game. Swank's groin injury last season gave Shane Popham a leg up, as he made 7 of 12 field goals and all nine of his extra points while helping Wake lead the ACC in net punting.

But Popham was injured in the spring, and four-year soccer player Cline Beam did all the kicking in the spring game. Grobe has a couple of incoming recruits entering the wide-open competition in the fall.

OVERVIEW

Wake Forest's season, unlike last year, will depend more on its offense until a young defense comes around. The Deacons will count on the efficiency of Skinner and the tandem of Adams and Pendergrass running behind a veteran line.

The defense lost Curry, the Butkus Award winner, and Smith, the ACC's all-time leader in interceptions, but has plenty of promise. The Deacons could gain a boost in confidence from a schedule that features five of the first six games at BB&T Field. That could set the tone for a fourth straight season of eight or more wins.



RILEY SKINNER

Photo by Brian A. Westerholt/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Riley Skinner***	**6-1**	**205**	**Sr.**
	Ryan McManus	6-1	200	Sr.
RB	**Josh Adams***	**6-0**	**182**	**Jr.**
	Brandon Pendergrass	5-9	200	So.
FB	**Mike Rinfrette***	**6-3**	**265**	**Sr.**
	Kevin Harris	6-1	225	Sr.
WR	Marshall Williams	6-1	193	Jr.
	Jordan Williams	6-3	200	Jr.
WR	Devon Brown	5-9	185	So.
	Chris Givens	6-0	195	Fr.
TE	**Ben Wooster***	**6-5**	**235**	**Sr.**
	Andrew Parker	6-5	225	So.
LT	Chris DeGeare	6-4	337	Sr.
	Dennis Godfrey	6-3	320	So.
LG	**Barrett McMillin***	**6-3**	**285**	**Sr.**
	Joe Looney*	**6-3**	**295**	**So.**
C	**Russell Nenon***	**6-4**	**285**	**Jr.**
	Trey Bailey	6-2	290	Sr.
RG	**Jeff Griffin***	**6-3**	**292**	**Sr.**
	Michael Hoag	6-6	295	So.
RT	**Joe Birdsong***	**6-4**	**290**	**Sr.**
	Doug Weaver	6-8	290	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Tristan Dorty	6-2	249	So.
	Derricus Ellis	6-2	225	Fr.
NG	**Boo Robinson***	**6-2**	**325**	**Sr.**
	Ramon Booi	6-6	330	Fr.
DT	**John Russell***	**6-4**	**283**	**Sr.**
	Michael Lockett	6-0	285	Sr.
DE	**Kyle Wilber***	**6-5**	**230**	**So.**
	Will Wright	6-4	232	So.
LB	Jonathan Jones	6-3	231	Sr.
	Lee Malchow	6-5	220	Sr.
LB	Matt Woodlief	5-11	254	Jr.
	Dominique Midgett	6-2	252	Sr.
LB	Hunter Haynes	6-2	232	Jr.
	Kyle Jarrett	6-2	228	So.
CB	Josh Bush	5-11	205	So.
	Kenny Okoro	6-0	185	Fr.
CB	**Brandon Ghee***	**6-0**	**191**	**Sr.**
	Michael Williams	6-1	170	So.
SS	Cyhl Quarles	6-3	205	So.
	Junior Petit-Jean	6-0	198	So.
FS	Alex Frye	6-3	193	Jr.
	John Stamper	6-0	195	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Shane Popham	5-11	192	So.
P	**Shane Popham***	**5-11**	**192**	**So.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	BAYLOR
Sept. 12	STANFORD
Sept. 19	ELON
Sept. 26	at Boston College
Oct. 3	NC STATE
Oct. 10	MARYLAND
Oct. 17	at Clemson
Oct. 24	at Navy
Oct. 31	MIAMI
Nov. 7	at Georgia Tech
Nov. 14	FLORIDA STATE
Nov. 28	at Duke

2008 Results

(8-5, 4-4)

W	at Baylor	41-13
W	MISSISSIPPI	30-28
W	at Florida State	12-3
L	NAVY	17-24
W	CLEMSON	12-7
L	at Maryland	0-26
L	at Miami	10-16
W	DUKE (OT)	33-30
W	VIRGINIA	28-17
L	at NC State	17-21
L	BOSTON COLLEGE	21-24
W	VANDERBILT	23-10
	EagleBank Bowl	
W	vs. Navy	29-19

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	21.0	95
Rushing	121.4	92
Passing	186.9	87
Total	308.3	101
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	18.3	16
Rushing	124.2	29
Passing	172.5	12
Total	296.7	16
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 17	+ 1.31	5

CLEMSON TIGERS

NATIONAL RANK 33

ACC rank: 6 | Record: 7-6 | ACC record: 4-4 (T-2nd, Atlantic) | Stadium: Clemson Memorial (81,473)

Tigers in A Box

COACH: Dabo Swinney — At Clemson and overall: 4-3, 1 year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Billy Napier
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kevin Steele
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1991
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2005
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 7 offense, 8 defense
PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB C.J. Spiller, WR Jacoby Ford, LG Thomas Austin, DE Da'Quan Bowers, DE Ricky Sapp, LB Brandon Maye, SS DeAndre McDaniel, CB Chris Chancellor
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The offense has big-play ability with Spiller and Ford. Backup tailbacks Jamie Harper and Andre Ellington could present some problems for opposing defensive coordinators. The defense should be good as usual, led by a stout front and a veteran secondary.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Quarterback is a question mark. Receiver is a glaring issue after the loss of Aaron Kelly and Tyler Grisham. The linebackers are young and unproven beyond Maye and Kavell Conner. Do the Tigers have someone who can make pressure kicks in tight games?

OFFENSE

Looking at the numbers from last season, it's hard to believe Clemson's quarterback and two running backs finished 1-2-3 in ACC preseason Player of the Year voting.

The Tigers produced 250 yards or less in five games. They gave up 34 sacks. They averaged 111 rushing yards a game despite the presence of C.J. Spiller and James Davis.

The struggles demonstrated that all the star power in the world means little without an offensive line, and the boys up front need to be a lot better.

Center Bobby Hutchinson is the only lost starter. This group, led by left tackle Chris Hairston and left guard Thomas Austin, is growing up and should be getting more physical. The line might not be a great strength, but it also might not be a weakness this time around.

As for quarterback, redshirt freshman Kyle Parker turned heads during the spring juggling football and baseball, and he seems to have a slight edge over third-year sophomore Willy Korn.

The offense is hurting at receiver after the loss of Aaron Kelly and Tyler Grisham. Beyond senior Jacoby Ford, there's not much there. Incoming freshman Bryce McNeal will be given an opportunity to contribute right away.

Spiller, a do-it-all lightning-quick tailback, can help out in the passing game by motioning out wide.

DEFENSE

Defense has carried the Tigers in the past few years, which makes it seem odd that a new coordinator is calling the shots.

Vic Koenning didn't see eye-to-eye with new coach Dabo Swinney and elected to depart after four solid years. Swinney made a big splash by luring Kevin Steele from Alabama, and the early reviews on Steele are favorable.

Senior cornerbacks Chris Chancellor and Crezdon Butler are a good fit for Steele's press-man style, but the secondary has some issues after the departure of safeties Michael Hamlin and Chris Clemons.

Steele loves DeAndre McDaniel, who played strongside linebacker last season but has moved to Hamlin's old spot at strong safety. The other safety spot is a big question mark, but backup corner Marcus Gilchrist could end up being the answer.

The line lost a lot on the interior, though Jarvis Jenkins and Brandon Thompson are a solid combination.

Sophomore end Da'Quan Bowers is primed for a breakout season. Senior end Ricky Sapp is facing questions about December ACL surgery, which kept him out of spring practice.

There are major issues at linebacker, where there isn't much beyond Kavell Conner and Brandon Maye.

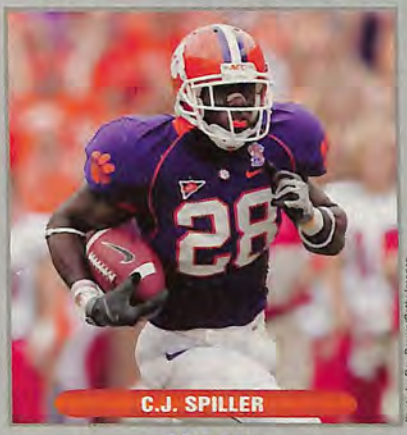
SPECIAL TEAMS

Spencer Benton and Richard Jackson are battling to replace Mark Buchholz at kicker, but neither has inspired the confidence that he can make pressure kicks on a consistent basis. Dawson Zimmerman is the favorite to replace punter Jimmy Maners.

OVERVIEW

The good news: Clemson has the talent to win the ACC. The bad news: The same was the case in the past three years, and the Tigers didn't cash in. Spiller's decision to return for his senior season was huge and makes offensive coordinator Billy Napier's job a lot easier.

But will the Tigers be good enough at quarterback? Receiver? Linebacker? It wouldn't be a surprise if this team advanced to the ACC title game, but past disappointments make it hard to predict that outcome.



C.J. SPILLER

Photo by Rex Brown/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Kyle Parker	6-0	210	Fr.
	Willy Korn	6-2	220	So.
RB	C.J. Spiller	5-11	195	Sr.
	Andre Ellington	5-10	180	Fr.
RB	Jamie Harper	5-11	235	So.
	Rendrick Taylor	6-2	255	Sr.
WR	**Jacoby Ford***	**5-10**	**185**	**Sr.**
	Marquan Jones	5-11	185	So.
WR	Xavier Dye	6-5	210	Jr.
	Jaron Brown	6-2	190	Fr.
TE	**Michael Palmer***	**6-5**	**250**	**Jr.**
	Dwayne Allen	6-3	245	Fr.
LT	**Chris Hairston***	**6-6**	**320**	**Jr.**
	J.K. Jay	6-6	285	Fr.
LG	**Thomas Austin***	**6-3**	**315**	**Sr.**
	Wilson Norris	6-4	310	So.
C	**Mason Cloy***	**6-3**	**310**	**So.**
	Dalton Freeman	6-4	270	Fr.
RG	Antoine McClain	6-5	325	So.
	David Smith	6-5	290	So.
RT	**Landon Walker***	**6-5**	**300**	**So.**
	Cory Lambert*	**6-6**	**310**	**Sr.**

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Da'Quan Bowers	6-4	275	So.
	Andre Branch	6-5	250	So.
DT	**Jarvis Jenkins***	**6-4**	**305**	**Jr.**
	Jamie Cumbie	6-7	270	Jr.
DT	Brandon Thompson	6-2	315	So.
	Rennie Moore	6-4	265	So.
DE	**Ricky Sapp***	**6-4**	**240**	**Sr.**
	Kevin Alexander*	**6-3**	**255**	**Sr.**
LB	**Kavell Conner***	**6-1**	**225**	**Sr.**
	Jeremy Campbell	6-1	220	Sr.
LB	**Brandon Maye***	**6-2**	**225**	**So.**
	Jonathan Willard	6-1	215	Fr.
LB	Scotty Cooper	6-1	215	Jr.
	Stanley Hunter	5-11	225	So.
CB	**Chris Chancellor***	**5-10**	**165**	**Sr.**
	Coty Sensabaugh	6-0	180	So.
CB	**Crezdon Butler***	**6-0**	**185**	**Sr.**
	Byron Maxwell	6-1	200	Jr.
SS	**DeAndre McDaniel***	**6-1**	**200**	**Jr.**
	Carlton Lewis	6-2	200	Fr.
FS	Marcus Gilchrist	5-11	185	Jr.
	Jonathan Meeks	6-2	185	Jr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Spencer Benton	6-1	190	Fr.
P	Dawson Zimmerman	6-1	200	So.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Sept. 10	at Georgia Tech
Sept. 19	BOSTON COLLEGE
Sept. 26	TCU
Oct. 3	at Maryland
Oct. 17	WAKE FOREST
Oct. 24	at Miami
Oct. 31	COASTAL CAROLINA
Nov. 7	FLORIDA STATE
Nov. 14	at NC State
Nov. 21	VIRGINIA
Nov. 28	at South Carolina

2008 Results

(7-6, 4-4)

L	vs. Alabama	10-34
W	CITADEL	45-17
W	NC STATE	27-9
W	SOUTH CAROLINA STATE	54-0
L	MARYLAND	17-20
L	at Wake Forest	7-12
L	GEORGIA TECH	17-21
W	at Boston College	27-21
L	at Florida State	27-41
W	DUKE	31-7
W	at Virginia	13-3
W	SOUTH CAROLINA	31-14
	Gator Bowl	
L	vs. Nebraska	21-26

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.2	60
Rushing	111.5	99
Passing	217.9	58
Total	329.4	87
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	17.3	13
Rushing	127.4	36
Passing	172.5	12
Total	299.9	18
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-1	-0.08	67

MIAMI HURRICANES

NATIONAL RANK 35

ACC rank: 7 | Record: 7-6 | ACC record: 4-4 (T-3rd, Coastal) | Stadium: Dolphin Stadium (74,916)

Hurricanes in A Box

COACH: Randy Shannon — At Miami and overall: 12-13, 2 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mark Whipple
DEFENSE COORDINATOR: John Lovett
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2003, Big East co-champions
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 6 offense, 6 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Jacory Harris, TB Graig Cooper, WR LaRon Byrd, WR Aldarius Johnson, OT Jason Fox, DE Eric Moncur, LB Sean Spence, LB Colin McCarthy
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Whipple has injected excitement into the offense. Harris continues to grow mentally and physically. With another year, the young receivers should develop. Cooper has the potential to gain 1,500 yards in rushing and receiving. Defensive line has a lot of depth and Bosher is a dual-weapon.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Secondary has shown little big-play ability. Tight ends might not produce much if Dedrick Epps can't recover from offseason knee surgery. More than half the two-deep is filled with freshmen and sophomores. How will players develop after another season of new coordinators?

OFFENSE

The lasting image of Miami's offense is coach Randy Shannon calling timeout in the final seconds of a bowl loss as his team struggled in the two-minute drill. At that point, coordinator Patrick Nix was history.

Mark Whipple, best known for molding Ben Roethlisberger as quarterbacks coach with the Pittsburgh Steelers, becomes Miami's fifth offensive coordinator in five years.

His offense impressed players and coaches in the spring. There were more sets and unpredictable play-calling.

The quarterback job now rests squarely with sophomore Jacory Harris after the transfer of Robert Marve. Harris had respectable numbers last season — 118 of 194 for 1,195 yards with 12 touchdowns and seven interceptions. He has a lot to learn, but does have confidence and presence on the field.

Miami has built depth at tailback and wide receiver. Junior running back Graig Cooper is ready to have a big year.

At receiver, sophomore LaRon Byrd — with his personality, No. 47, physical play and big-play ability — is starting to remind people of Michael Irvin.

Fellow sophomore Aldarius Johnson has slimmed down and is quicker and stronger. Kendal Thompkins and Tommy Streeter, two players who redshirted last season, had solid springs. They'll push Travis Benjamin and Thearon Collier.

Javarris James, bothered by neck and ankle injuries, ran for just 868 yards in the past two seasons after going for 802 as a freshman. He needs to stay healthy, or Mike James and Lee Chambers will pass him by.

The line has five solid starters, including tackle Jason Fox, but Miami still needs to improve depth.

DEFENSE

New coordinator John Lovett's biggest challenge is getting more interceptions from his team. The Hurricanes had only four picks last season, two by the secondary.

Because of that of lack of production, secondary recruits like Prince Kent, Ray Ray Armstrong, Brandon McGee and Jamal Reid could play right away.

The secondary is helped by a deep line, which includes sixth-year senior end Eric Moncur. He was starting to come into form last year when he re-injured his hernia and was lost for the season.

He and safety Randy Phillips — granted sixth seasons by the NCAA — need to provide leadership and playmaking.

The linebacker group includes sophomore Sean Spence, named the ACC's Defensive Rookie of the Year, and Arthur Brown, who was all-everything in high school. Junior Colin McCarthy needs to stay healthy.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Hurricanes' MVP last season was Matt Bosher. Without him, Miami could've been 5-7 again — or worse. He made 18 of 20 field goals and all 40 extra points. He also averaged 40.3 yards per punt.

Bosher looks like he'll be pulling double duty again.

OVERVIEW

Who made this schedule? Miami opens against four Top 25 teams — at Florida State, vs. Georgia Tech, at Virginia Tech, vs. Oklahoma. Shannon said it's a chance for his players to show they're a Top 10 team. We'll see.

With a strong core of young players, Miami appears headed in the right direction. The Hurricanes might not begin to show it in the win column until the second month of the season, though.

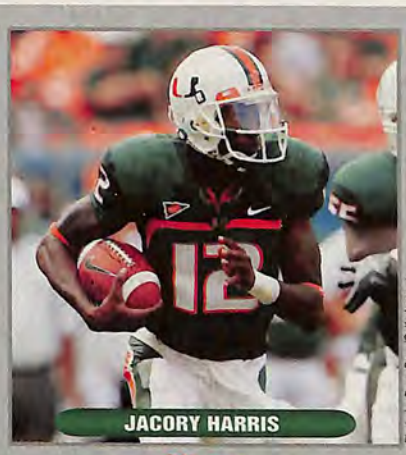

JACORY HARRIS

Photo by Doug Benc/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Jacory Harris	6-4	190	So.
	Taylor Cook	6-7	232	Fr.
TB	**Graig Cooper***	**6-0**	**202**	**Jr.**
	Javarris James	6-0	215	Sr.
WR	LaRon Byrd	6-4	215	So.
	Leonard Hankerson	6-3	215	Jr.
WR	**Aldarius Johnson***	**6-2**	**205**	**So.**
	Thearon Collier	5-8	192	So.
WR	Travis Benjamin	5-10	170	So.
	Kendal Thompkins	5-10	173	Fr.
TE	**Dedrick Epps***	**6-4**	**253**	**Sr.**
	Richard Gordon	6-4	270	Sr.
LT	**Jason Fox***	**6-7**	**310**	**Sr.**
	Ben Jones	6-5	314	So.
LG	**Orlando Franklin***	**6-7**	**334**	**Jr.**
	Ian Symonette	6-9	351	Jr.
C	**A.J. Trump***	**6-3**	**308**	**Sr.**
	Tyler Horn	6-4	300	So.
RG	Joel Figueroa	6-5	335	Jr.
	Harland Gunn	6-2	315	So.
RT	Matt Pipho	6-7	307	Sr.
	Brandon Washington	6-4	343	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Eric Moncur***	**6-2**	**255**	**Sr.**
	Olivier Vernon	6-2	250	Fr.
DT	Marcus Forston	6-2	306	Fr.
	Josh Holmes	6-0	279	Jr.
DT	Allen Bailey	6-4	290	Jr.
	Micanor Regis	6-2	301	So.
DE	Adewale Ojomo	6-3	250	So.
	Marcus Robinson*	**6-1**	**242**	**So.**
LB	**Sean Spence***	**6-0**	**211**	**So.**
	Arthur Brown	6-2	220	So.
LB	**Darryl Sharpton***	**5-11**	**235**	**Sr.**
	Jordan Futch	6-2	215	So.
LB	Colin McCarthy	6-3	240	Sr.
	Ramon Buchanan	6-1	205	So.
CB	**Brandon Harris***	**5-10**	**190**	**So.**
	Sam Shields	6-0	186	Sr.
CB	Prince Kent	6-3	195	Fr.
	DeMarcus Van Dyke	6-1	182	Jr.
SS	Randy Phillips	6-0	210	Sr.
	JoJo Nicolas*	**6-1**	**197**	**Jr.**
FS	Vaughn Telemaque	6-1	196	Fr.
	Ray Ray Armstrong	6-4	215	Fr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Matt Bosher***	**6-0**	**205**	**Jr.**
P	**Matt Bosher***	**6-0**	**205**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 7	at Florida State
Sept. 17	GEORGIA TECH
Sept. 26	at Virginia Tech
Oct. 3	OKLAHOMA
Oct. 10	FLORIDA A&M
Oct. 17	at UCF
Oct. 24	CLEMSON
Oct. 31	at Wake Forest
Nov. 7	VIRGINIA
Nov. 14	at North Carolina
Nov. 21	DUKE
Nov. 28	South Florida

2008 Results

	(7-6, 4-4)	
W	CHARLESTON SOUTHERN	52-7
L	at Florida	3-26
W	at Texas A&M	41-23
L	NORTH CAROLINA	24-28
L	FLORIDA STATE	39-41
W	UCF	20-14
W	at Duke	49-31
W	WAKE FOREST	16-10
W	at Virginia (OT)	24-17
W	VIRGINIA TECH	16-14
L	at Georgia Tech	23-41
L	at NC State	28-38
	Emerald Bowl	
L	vs. California	17-24

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.1	50
Rushing	129.2	78
Passing	196.8	77
Total	326.0	89
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.2	56
Rushing	151.9	75
Passing	165.6	7
Total	317.5	28
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-10	-0.77	103

NC STATE WOLFPACK

NATIONAL RANK 49

Record: 6-7 | ACC record: 4-4 (T-3rd, Atlantic) | Stadium: Carter-Finley Stadium (57,583)

Wolfpack in A Box

COACH: Tom O'Brien — At NC State: 11-14, 2 years; overall: 86-59, 11 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dana Bible
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Archer
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1979
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 7 offense, 7 defense, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Russell Wilson, DE Willie Young, LB Ray Michel, LB Nate Irving, CB DeAndre Morgan, RB Jamelle Eugene, WR Owen Spencer
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Keeping the ball in Wilson's hands proved the best strategy for O'Brien's offense. The play up front is a key for his continued progress. NC State's D-line isn't just loaded, it has plenty of talented depth.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Wilson has a good enough backup in Glennon, but needs more from the skill players that surround him, especially at wide receiver. A pass rush should aid the defensive backfield. The secondary isn't shaky, but it's unclear who is going to make the big plays.

OFFENSE

The perilous juggling act at quarterback that inspired rollercoaster offensive play ended with ACC Rookie of the Year Russell Wilson bursting onto the scene in 2008.

He's a dynamic player, but he didn't fully commit to football and was in and out of spring practice because his double athletic life called for him to play second base for the NC State baseball team.

Wilson threw 17 touchdown passes with only one interception last year. He passed for 1,955 yards and ran for 388.

The bonus for NC State was that redshirt freshman Mike Glennon drew raves all spring and should be the ready replacement in case Wilson gets a little banged up or the offense needs a change-up.

The offensive line's first unit is steady. Three starters return — left tackle Jake Vermiglio, center Ted Larsen and right tackle Jeraill McCuller — but there's an off-a-cliff drop to the raw second stringers.

Tailback Jamelle Eugene, first in line to replace draft pick Andre Brown, had a shoulder injury that limited him in spring drills. With Eugene out, former North Carolina prep Player of the Year Toney Baker, now a senior, put his best foot forward. Baker has recovered from two major knee surgeries.

Wide receivers Jarvis Williams (26 catches for 432 yards and four TDs in '08) and Owen Spencer (31 catches for 691 yards and five touchdowns) are Wilson's top targets.

DEFENSE

The Wolfpack was opportunistic without being special in any individual statistical ranking last season. Three of the final four regular-season opponents were held to 17 points or less.

The D-line was the cause of much of that success. Defensive tackle Alan-Michael Cash and ends Shea McKeen and Willie Young have plenty of seasoning, combining for 23.5 tackles for loss and 12.5 sacks last season.

Young, who led the team with 12.5 tackles for loss and 6.5 sacks, is on the radar of NFL scouts. Senior defensive tackle Leroy Burgess could take off if his spring dominance continues in September.

The pecking order at safety won't be clear for some time. The free safety job was a four-man battle. Junior strong safety Javon Walker, who brought game-changing instincts before an ACL injury in 2007, will be ready for contact drills in the fall.

The heart of the defense appears to be the linebacker corps.

Nate Irving had 80 tackles, with 11 for loss and four interceptions, last season and has the fluid athleticism on the weak side to stay on the field on every down. Middle linebacker Ray Michel (85 tackles) and cornerback DeAndre Morgan (10 passes defended) are also difference-makers.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker John Czajkowski made 16 of 19 field goal tries last season with a long of 42. Minus the big-time leg, coach Tom O'Brien will take the same consistency.

The punting job is Jeff Ruiz's to lose, and the senior did nothing to relinquish the role in spring.

OVERVIEW

O'Brien's disciplined approach was evident in his team, especially Russell Wilson, but a repeat performance would be asking a lot. More impact plays on defense, though, will deflect some pressure from Wilson and keep the Wolfpack in the Atlantic race into the season's final month.

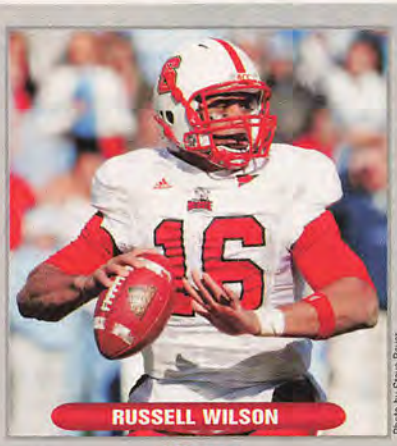

RUSSELL WILSON

Photo by Steve Beyer

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Russell Wilson***	**5-11**	**208**	**So.**
	Mike Glennon	6-6	211	Fr.
RB	Jamelle Eugene	5-10	195	Sr.
	Toney Baker	5-10	225	Sr.
FB	Taylor Gentry	6-2	224	So.
	Colby Jackson	6-2	225	Fr.
WR	**Jarvis Williams***	**6-4**	**205**	**Jr.**
	Jay Smith	6-2	197	So.
WR	**Owen Spencer***	**6-3**	**180**	**Jr.**
	Steven Howard	6-2	190	So.
TE	**George Bryan***	**6-5**	**270**	**So.**
	Mario Carter	6-4	256	Fr.
LT	**Jake Vermiglio***	**6-5**	**315**	**Jr.**
	Sam Jones	6-7	295	Fr.
LG	Julian Williams	6-5	311	Gr.
	Andrew Wallace	6-5	282	Fr.
C	**Ted Larsen***	**6-2**	**300**	**Sr.**
	Henry Lawson	6-3	295	So.
RG	Andy Barbee	6-3	310	Sr.
	Zach Allen	6-3	320	Fr.
RT	**Jeraill McCuller***	**6-7**	**335**	**Sr.**
	R.J. Mattes	6-6	313	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Shea McKeen***	**6-5**	**255**	**Sr.**
	Audi Augustin	6-2	253	Jr.
DT	Leroy Burgess	6-1	300	Sr.
	J.R. Sweezy	6-5	280	So.
DT	**Alan-Michael Cash***	**6-1**	**286**	**Sr.**
	Nathan Mageo	6-3	290	Jr.
DE	**Willie Young***	**6-4**	**250**	**Sr.**
	Jeff Rieskamp	6-3	235	So.
LB	Dwayne Maddox	6-2	225	So.
	Terrell Manning	6-3	220	Fr.
LB	**Ray Michel***	**6-0**	**229**	**Sr.**
	Sterling Lucas	6-2	227	So.
LB	**Nate Irving***	**6-1**	**235**	**Jr.**
	Audie Cole	6-5	234	So.
CB	**DeAndre Morgan***	**5-10**	**170**	**Jr.**
	Koyal George	5-11	175	Sr.
CB	Dominique Ellis	5-11	190	So.
	C.J. Wilson	5-11	175	Fr.
SS	Clem Johnson	6-0	200	Sr.
	Earl Wolff	6-0	190	Fr.
FS	Jimmaul Simmons	6-2	200	So.
	Justin Byers*	**6-0**	**188**	**So.**

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Josh Czajkowski***	**5-9**	**184**	**Jr.**
P	Jeff Ruiz	6-2	185	Sr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 3	SOUTH CAROLINA
Sept. 12	MURRAY STATE
Sept. 19	GARDNER-WEBB
Sept. 26	PITTSBURGH
Oct. 3	at Wake Forest
Oct. 10	DUKE
Oct. 17	at Boston College
Oct. 31	at Florida State
Nov. 7	MARYLAND
Nov. 14	CLEMSON
Nov. 21	at Virginia Tech
Nov. 28	NORTH CAROLINA

2008 Results

	(6-7, 4-4)	
L	at South Carolina	0-34
W	WILLIAM & MARY	34-24
L	at Clemson	9-27
W	EAST CAROLINA (OT)	30-24
L	SOUTH FLORIDA	10-41
L	BOSTON COLLEGE	31-38
L	FLORIDA STATE	17-26
L	at Maryland	24-27
W	at Duke	27-17
W	WAKE FOREST	21-17
W	at North Carolina	41-10
W	MIAMI	38-28
	Papajohns.com Bowl	
L	vs. Rutgers	23-29

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	23.5	80
Rushing	123.2	87
Passing	206.0	65
Total	329.2	88
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	26.3	65
Rushing	142.2	66
Passing	248.7	96
Total	390.9	83
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 8	+ 0.62	22

BOSTON COLLEGE EAGLES

NATIONAL RANK 52

ACC rank: 9 | Record: 9-5 | ACC record: 5-3 (T-1st, Atlantic) | Stadium: Alumni Stadium (44,500)

Eagles in A Box

COACH: Frank Spaziani — At Boston College and overall: 1-0, 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Gary Tranquill
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bill McGovern
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2004, Big East co-champions
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 1998
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 7 offense, 7 defense, punter, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: LB Mark Herzlich, CB Donnie Fletcher, FS Wes Davis, C Matt Tennant, LT Anthony Castonzo, WR Rich Gunnell, RB Montel Harris, RB Josh Haden
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: With a good offensive line and two very good running backs, the Eagles should run the ball consistently. With experience and talent in the secondary, the Eagles should handle a good passing attack. Herzlich is a playmaker against the run and pass.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Boston College still doesn't have a starting quarterback. Defensively, the Eagles have a huge hole to fill in the middle of the line. It would be a big setback if middle linebacker Mike McLaughlin can't return to form.

OFFENSE

The Eagles are still looking to settle on a starting quarterback.

Sophomore Dominique Davis, by virtue of his three starts in relief of an injured Chris Crane last year, is considered the leader. But he did not distinguish himself enough in spring ball that new coach Frank Spaziani or new coordinator Gary Tranquill were ready to give him the keys.

The main competitors are redshirt freshman Justin Tuggle and senior Codi Boek, neither of whom has taken a snap at the collegiate level. Boek is a former junior college transfer who was converted to a fullback in his first year at BC before the lack of depth at quarterback put him back at his desired position.

In contrast to the offense of former coordinator Steve Logan — he was phasing in elements of the spread last year — Tranquill's attack will be more pro style. That leaves Boston College starting a bit from scratch again.

If nothing else, the Eagles should be able to rely on a good ground game. Expect the offensive line to incorporate more traditional blocking schemes for a very good tandem of backs in true sophomores Josh Haden and Montel Harris, one of the true finds for former coach Jeff Jagodzinski.

DEFENSE

The Eagles have to replace about 700 pounds of run-stuffing beef in the middle of the line.

The departure of tackles B.J. Raji (a first-round pick of the Green Bay Packers) and Ron Brace (a second-round pick of the New England Patriots) is every bit as much cause for consternation as the departure of quarterback Matt Ryan was after the previous season.

The tackle spots belong to junior Damik Scafe and Kaleb Ramsey. Scafe played a fair amount in the past two years, showing off a good motor. Ramsey saw some limited time at end last year.

The linebacking corps boasts the team's likely MVP, Mark Herzlich, who is *Lindy's* national top-rated outside linebacker. But the Eagles suffered a big loss prior to spring drills when middle linebacker and defensive captain Mike McLaughlin tore his Achilles' tendon.

The recovery time was expected to be about five months, which means McLaughlin could be ready for the season opener.

The secondary, a major question mark last year, should be one of the Eagles' strengths. Wes Davis and Marcellus Bowman are solid safeties. At the corners are ever-improving senior Roderick Rollins and Donnie Fletcher, who played well as a freshman.

SPECIAL TEAMS

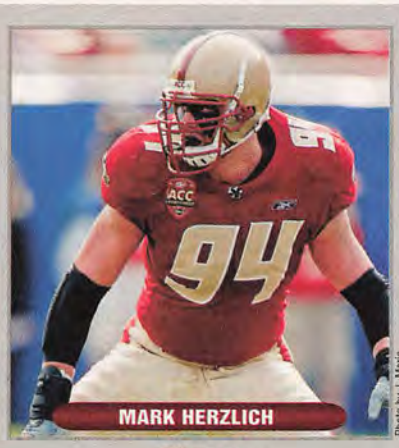
Injuries have kept kick returner Jeff Smith from having the type of career projected for him when he exploded onto the scene as a true freshman, compiling 213 return yards and a touchdown against Clemson.

Provided he's healthy, Smith can still be dangerous in the open field. Montel Harris is also expected to return kicks.

Punt returner Rich Gunnell, on top of being a sure-handed presence, also pulled off a game-changing return for a touchdown against Virginia Tech in a regular-season win over the Hokies.

OVERVIEW

With inexperience at the quarterback position, BC will need to be able to run the ball. Defensively, the Eagles figure to have a tougher time stopping the run. Last year, the front seven picked up a young secondary. This year, it might be time for the secondary to return the favor.



MARK HERZLICH

Photo by J. Metric

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Dominique Davis	6-4	198	So.
	Codi Boek	6-3	221	Jr.
TB	**Montel Harris***	**5-10**	**192**	**So.**
	Josh Haden	5-8	182	So.
FB	**James McCluskey***	**6-2**	**246**	**Jr.**
	Bill Ferguson	6-2	215	Sr.
WR	**Rich Gunnell***	**5-11**	**196**	**Sr.**
	Colin Larmond	6-3	196	So.
WR	Justin Jarvis	6-5	196	Sr.
	Ifeanyi Momah	6-6	225	Jr.
TE	Lars Anderson	6-3	248	So.
	Jordon McMichael	6-5	262	Jr.
LT	**Anthony Castonzo***	**6-7**	**287**	**Jr.**
	Emmett Cleary	6-7	267	Fr.
LG	**Thomas Claiborne***	**6-3**	**323**	**Jr.**
	Nick Rossi	6-6	290	Sr.
C	**Matt Tennant***	**6-4**	**294**	**Sr.**
	Mark Spinney	6-4	287	So.
RG	Nathan Richman	6-6	284	So.
	Nick Halloran	6-6	265	Fr.
RT	**Rich Lapham***	**6-8**	**322**	**Jr.**
	Mike Goodman	6-6	328	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Alex Albright***	**6-5**	**245**	**Jr.**
	Austin Giles	6-3	283	Sr.
DT	Kaleb Ramsey	6-3	256	So.
	Brendan Deska	6-5	241	Sr.
DT	Damik Scafe	6-3	293	Jr.
	Bryan Murray	6-2	292	Fr.
DE	**Jim Ramella***	**6-4**	**243**	**Sr.**
	Brad Newman	6-2	250	Jr.
LB	**Mark Herzlich***	**6-4**	**238**	**Sr.**
	Dominick LeGrande	6-2	200	So.
LB	**Mike McLaughlin***	**6-0**	**252**	**Sr.**
	Will Thompson	6-1	235	So.
LB	Nick Clancy	6-3	217	Fr.
	Mike Morrissey	6-2	210	Jr.
CB	Donnie Fletcher	6-1	186	So.
	Isaac Johnson	6-0	179	So.
CB	**Roderick Rollins***	**6-0**	**188**	**Sr.**
	DeLeon Gause	5-11	174	Jr.
SS	**Marcellus Bowman***	**6-2**	**217**	**Sr.**
	Donte Elliott	6-0	178	Fr.
FS	**Wes Davis***	**6-1**	**215**	**Jr.**
	Okechukwu Okoroha	6-1	192	Fr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Steve Aponavicius***	**5-10**	**198**	**Sr.**
P	**Ryan Quigley***	**6-3**	**180**	**So.**

*** Returning Starters in Bold**

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	NORTHEASTERN
Sept. 12	KENT STATE
Sept. 19	at Clemson
Sept. 26	WAKE FOREST
Oct. 3	FLORIDA STATE
Oct. 10	at Virginia Tech
Oct. 17	NC STATE
Oct. 24	at Notre Dame
Oct. 31	CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Nov. 14	at Virginia
Nov. 21	NORTH CAROLINA
Nov. 28	at Maryland

2008 Results

(9-5, 5-3)

W	vs. Kent State	21-0
L	GEORGIA TECH	16-19
W	UCF	34-7
W	RHODE ISLAND	42-0
W	at NC State	38-31
W	VIRGINIA TECH	28-23
L	at North Carolina	24-45
L	CLEMSON	21-27
W	NOTRE DAME	17-0
W	at Florida State	27-17
W	at Wake Forest	24-21
W	MARYLAND	28-21
	ACC Championship Game	
L	vs. Virginia Tech	12-30
	Music City Bowl	
L	vs. Vanderbilt	14-16

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.7	66
Rushing	142.9	63
Passing	176.5	93
Total	319.4	94
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	18.4	17
Rushing	91.2	7
Passing	176.9	18
Total	268.1	5
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 3	+ 0.21	46

MARYLAND TERRAPINS

NATIONAL RANK 59

ACC rank: 10 | Record: 8-5 | ACC record: 4-4 (T-3rd, Atlantic) | Stadium: Byrd Stadium (51,500)

Terrapins in A Box

COACH: Ralph Friedgen — At Maryland and overall: 64-36, 8 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: James Franklin
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Don Brown
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2001
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2005
RETURNING STARTERS: 11; 6 offense, 4 defense, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Chris Turner, RB Da'Rel Scott, OT Bruce Campbell, DT Travis Ivey, LB Alex Wujciak, CB Nolan Carroll
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Maryland has a third-year starter at quarterback and the deepest, most talented stable of receivers of Friedgen's tenure. Maryland also returns a first team All-ACC tailback (Scott), along with solid backups in Davin Meggett and Morgan Green.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Maryland lost three starters from the offensive line, plus blocking tight end Dan Gronkowski. The Terps brought in a huge class of offensive linemen in 2008, and some of those players must step up. There are similar concerns along the defensive line.

OFFENSE

Maryland struggled to adapt to the West Coast-style passing offense that first-year coordinator James Franklin installed last season. It's a timing-based attack predicated on quick recognition by the quarterback, accurate throws and yards after the catch.

The offense should run smoother now that starting quarterback Chris Turner and other skill players have more experience.

Turner, who has made 20 starts over the past two seasons and has a 6-1 record against Top 25 teams, has a chance to conclude his career as one of the most prolific passers in school history. He is seventh on Maryland's all-time list in passing yards (4,474), fourth in completion percentage (59.7) and fifth in completions (367).

There are plenty of weapons, beginning with tailback Da'Rel Scott, a first-team All-ACC selection after rushing for 1,133 yards and eight touchdowns in 2009. Scott has game-breaking ability, but he must become more consistent and versatile.

Despite the loss of first-round NFL draft pick Darrius Heyward-Bey and two other part-time starters (Danny Oquendo, Isaiah Williams), the Terrapins hope to have one of the most potent receiving corps in the ACC.

Sophomore Torrey Smith, who seized the starting job away from Williams last season and made 24 catches for 336 yards, leads a group of wideouts that is loaded with size, speed and athleticism.

Tackle Bruce Campbell and Phil Costa are the lone returning starters on the line, with the latter being switched from right guard to center.

DEFENSE

Don Brown has replaced Chris Cosh as coordinator and switched from a 3-4 base to a 4-3. Brown, who previously served as head coach and defensive coordinator at Massachusetts, employs an aggressive, attacking scheme.

Nose tackle Travis Ivey took his game to another level during spring camp after enduring an injury-plagued 2008. The senior has an NFL body and appears ready to emerge as an interior presence.

There is talent in the linebacker corps with juniors Alex Wujciak and Adrian Moten. Wujciak led Maryland with 133 tackles last season and is the perfect fit for the middle linebacker spot in the new 4-3 look. Moten is a multi-dimensional backer with All-ACC potential.

Hard-hitting safety Terrell Skinner and cornerback Anthony Wiseman are returning starters in a relatively experienced secondary. Nolan Carroll emerged as the top cover corner during spring camp, while Jamari McCollough looked solid at strong safety.

SPECIAL TEAMS

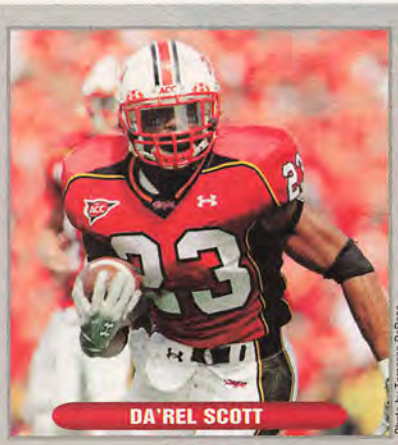
The Terps return first-team All-ACC punter Travis Baltz, a two-year starter who led the league with a 41.1-yard average in 2008. Sophomore Mike Barbour beat out fellow walk-ons Nick Wallace and David May for the kicking job during spring practice, but the coaching staff is hoping scholarship recruit Nick Ferrara proves to be an upgrade.

Torrey Smith set an ACC single-season record with 1,089 kickoff return yards.

OVERVIEW

That 60 of 85 scholarship players have three or more years of eligibility illustrates the youth of this team. There are a ton of new faces on the depth chart, and both the offensive and defensive lines have serious question marks.

The Terps' past three recruiting classes have been highly rated, so there is plenty of talent on the roster. But it might not be enough right now against the competitive middle of the ACC.



DA'REL SCOTT

Photo by Tomasso DeRosa

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Chris Turner***	**6-4**	**220**	**Sr.**
	Jamarr Robinson	6-0	190	So.
RB	**Da'Rel Scott***	**5-11**	**200**	**Jr.**
	Davin Meggett	5-8	220	So.
FB	**Cory Jackson***	**6-1**	**245**	**Sr.**
	Taylor Watson	6-2	245	So.
WR	**Torrey Smith***	**6-1**	**200**	**So.**
	Adrian Cannon	6-2	204	Jr.
WR	Tony Logan	5-10	180	So.
	Quintin McCree	6-1	190	So.
TE	Tommy Galt	6-5	260	Sr.
	Lansford Watson	6-4	260	So.
LT	Paul Pinegar	6-4	280	Jr.
	R.J. Dill	6-7	320	Fr.
LG	Lamar Young	6-4	320	So.
	Andrew Gonnella	6-6	305	So.
C	**Phil Costa***	**6-3**	**300**	**Sr.**
	Danny Edwards	6-1	280	Jr.
RG	Justin Lewis	6-4	320	Fr.
	Maurice Hampton	6-2	295	So.
RT	**Bruce Campbell***	**6-7**	**310**	**Jr.**
	Justin Gilbert	6-6	300	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Masengo Kabongo	6-1	275	Fr.
	Derek Drummond	6-4	250	So.
DT	**Travis Ivey***	**6-4**	**325**	**Sr.**
	A.J. Francis	6-5	310	Fr.
DT	Dion Armstrong	6-1	303	So.
	Ian Davidson	6-3	290	So.
DE	Jared Harrell	6-5	265	Sr.
	Deege Galt	6-4	264	Sr.
LB	Adrian Moten	6-2	230	Jr.
	Darin Drakeford	6-0	225	Fr.
LB	**Alex Wujciak***	**6-3**	**255**	**Jr.**
	Drew Gloster	6-3	245	Jr.
LB	Demetrius Hartsfield	6-2	230	Fr.
	Ben Pooler	6-3	235	So.
CB	Nolan Carroll	6-1	202	Sr.
	Travis Hawkins	5-10	181	Fr.
CB	**Anthony Wiseman***	**5-10**	**185**	**Sr.**
	Michael Carter	5-11	175	Jr.
SS	Jamari McCollough	5-11	200	Sr.
	Kenny Tate	6-4	225	So.
FS	**Terrell Skinner***	**6-3**	**214**	**Sr.**
	Antwine Perez	6-1	210	Jr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Nick Ferrara	6-1	195	Fr.
P	**Travis Baltz***	**6-2**	**200**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	at California
Sept. 12	JAMES MADISON
Sept. 19	MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Sept. 26	RUTGERS
Oct. 3	CLEMSON
Oct. 10	at Wake Forest
Oct. 17	VIRGINIA
Oct. 24	at Duke
Nov. 7	at NC State
Nov. 14	VIRGINIA TECH
Nov. 21	at Florida State
Nov. 28	BOSTON COLLEGE

2008 Results

	(8-5, 4-4)	
W	DELAWARE	14-7
L	at Middle Tennessee	14-24
W	CALIFORNIA	35-27
W	EASTERN MICHIGAN	51-24
W	at Clemson	20-17
L	at Virginia	0-31
W	WAKE FOREST	26-0
W	NC STATE	27-24
L	at Virginia Tech	13-23
W	NORTH CAROLINA	17-15
L	FLORIDA STATE	3-37
L	at Boston College	21-28
	Humanitarian Bowl	
W	vs. Nevada	42-35

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	21.8	92
Rushing	144.0	61
Passing	206.7	65
Total	350.7	68
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	22.5	44
Rushing	146.7	71
Passing	218.2	77
Total	364.9	63
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 8	- 0.62	97

VIRGINIA CAVALIERS

NATIONAL RANK 67

ACC rank: 11 | Record: 5-7 | ACC record: 3-5 (5th, Coastal) | Stadium: Scott Stadium (61,500)

Cavaliers in A Box

COACH: Al Groh – At Virginia: 56-44, 8 years; overall: 82-84, 14 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Gregg Brandon
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Al Groh
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1995
LAST BOWL: 2007 season, Gator
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 6 offense, 5 defense, punter, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Jameel Sewell, QB-WR Vic Hall, WR Jared Green, RB Mikell Simpson, CB Chris Cook, CB Ras-I Dowling, S Corey Mosley
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The defense is bolstered by the best secondary of the Groh era. The new spread offense has plenty of playmakers such as Sewell, Simpson and Hall, who could line up anywhere. Plus, there is an experienced offensive line.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Cavaliers still don't have a proven kicker, which cost them dearly a year ago. There's a lot of new faces playing linebacker in the 3-4, and the defensive line must find a way to pressure opposing passers.

OFFENSE

After fielding one of the most unproductive offenses in the nation for the past three years, coach Al Groh hired former Bowling Green head coach Gregg Brandon as the Cavaliers' new coordinator.

Brandon, who once teamed with Urban Meyer as innovators of the spread offense, brought his no-huddle laboratory to Charlottesville. He steps into a potentially high-powered situation at Virginia.

The Cavaliers started last season with no experienced quarterbacks, but Brandon has three to work with, including senior Jameel Sewell. He started in 2006 and 2007, but sat out last year due to an academic suspension. He ranks ninth on Virginia's career passing list.

Also returning is junior Marc Verica, who started most of last season, but could end up third on the depth chart.

That's because much of the buzz is about senior Vic Hall, a record-setting high school quarterback who played defense in his first three years at Virginia. He took over in a Wildcat role against Virginia Tech in the 2008 finale and delivered a jaw-dropping performance.

The quarterbacks should be well-protected behind a line that returns four starters, led by senior right tackle Will Barker.

Mikell Simpson, who dazzled fans two years ago at running back, seems to have returned to form, and there's a host of speedy receivers, including Darrell Green's son, Jared, ready for the wide-open spaces of the spread offense.

DEFENSE

This is the strongest secondary during the Groh era. It came along at a good time because there are a lot of new faces at the key linebacker positions.

Senior Chris Cook, who missed last season due to academics, returns at one corner, while Ras-I Dowling is back at the other, giving the Cavs two of the league's top players at the position. Chase Minnifield is experienced at the position as well.

Rodney McLeod and Corey Mosley are solid at safety, with experienced backups.

The Cavs lose three experienced starting linebackers. They are hoping Denzel Burrell, Aaron Clark and pass-rushing Cam Johnson can take care of the outside spots, with a host of others fighting for the two inside positions in Groh's 3-4 scheme.

Nick Jenkins returns at nose tackle, and talented sophomore Matt Conrath is back at end, giving the Cavaliers a stable line.

Former UVa All-American Anthony Poindexter has moved to secondary coach, which should add some fire to the unit, and Groh has officially added the defensive coordinator title to his responsibilities.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Former Kansas State head coach Ron Prince has taken over the special teams in order to add some punch to those squads. Prince featured some of the nation's most game-changing special teams while in the Big 12.

Sophomore Jimmy Howell returns after averaging 39 yards per punt last year.

Several players are battling for placekicking duties after a shaky season in 2008. Sophomore Robert Randolph, who took over the job midway through last season, is the frontrunner.

OVERVIEW

Virginia's season will depend on whether its new spread offense is as effective as planned. All eyes and a lot of the pressure are on Brandon to put ACC defenses on their heels. The Cavaliers desperately need a kicker to help them win the close ones. If that happens, Virginia could head into a difficult home stretch thinking of the postseason.

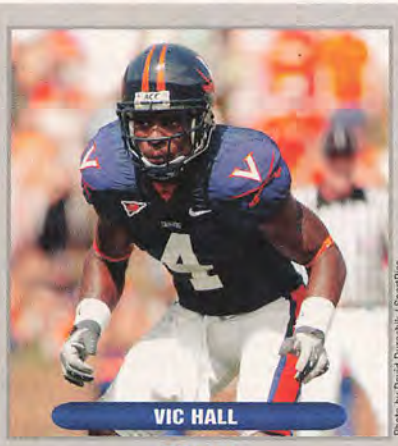

VIC HALL

Photo by David Durochik / SportPics

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Jameel Sewell	6-3	226	Sr.
	Vic Hall	5-9	190	Sr.
RB	Mikell Simpson	6-1	200	Sr.
	(FB) Rashawn Jackson*	**6-1**	**253**	**Sr.**
WR	Jared Green	6-2	178	So.
	Dontrelle Inman	6-3	191	Jr.
WR	Javaris Brown	5-11	180	Fr.
	Tim Smith	6-1	185	Fr.
WR	Kris Burd	5-11	189	So.
	Matt Snyder	6-4	205	So.
TE	Joe Torchia	6-5	255	Jr.
	Colter Phillips	6-6	240	Fr.
LT	Landon Bradley	6-7	275	So.
	Matt Mihalik	6-7	275	Fr.
LG	**Austin Pasztor***	**6-7**	**310**	**So.**
	Aaron Van Kuiken	6-7	308	Fr.
C	**Jack Shields***	**6-5**	**289**	**Jr.**
	Anthony Mihota	6-4	285	So.
RG	**B.J. Cabbell***	**6-6**	**304**	**Jr.**
	Isaac Cain	6-4	298	Jr.
RT	**Will Barker***	**6-7**	**315**	**Sr.**
	Lamar Milstead	6-5	290	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Matt Conrath***	**6-7**	**269**	**So.**
	Andrew Devlin	6-6	258	So.
NT	**Nick Jenkins***	**6-3**	**285**	**So.**
	Nate Collins	6-3	280	Sr.
DE	Nate Collins	6-3	280	Sr.
	Zane Parr	6-6	267	So.
LB	**Denzel Burrell***	**6-4**	**230**	**Sr.**
	Bill Schautz	6-4	220	Fr.
LB	Steve Greer	6-2	218	Fr.
	Darnell Carter	6-3	244	Jr.
LB	Darren Childs	6-1	233	Sr.
	Terence Fells-Danzer	6-1	242	So.
LB	Aaron Clark	6-5	250	Sr.
	Cam Johnson	6-4	220	So.
CB	Chris Cook	6-2	201	Sr.
	Chase Minnifield	6-0	192	So.
CB	**Ras-I Dowling***	**6-2**	**200**	**Jr.**
	Dom Joseph	6-1	195	So.
S	**Corey Mosley***	**5-10**	**197**	**So.**
	Brandon Woods	6-2	211	Sr.
S	Rodney McLeod	5-10	180	So.
	Ausar Walcott	6-4	200	Fr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Robert Randolph***	**5-10**	**160**	**So.**
P	**Jimmy Howell***	**6-6**	**238**	**So.**

*** Returning Starters in Bold**

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	WILLIAM & MARY
Sept. 12	TCU
Sept. 19	at Southern Mississippi
Oct. 3	at North Carolina
Oct. 10	INDIANA
Oct. 17	at Maryland
Oct. 24	GEORGIA TECH
Oct. 31	DUKE
Nov. 7	at Miami
Nov. 14	BOSTON COLLEGE
Nov. 21	at Clemson
Nov. 28	VIRGINIA TECH

2008 Results

(5-7, 3-5)

L	USC	7-52
W	RICHMOND	16-0
L	at Connecticut	10-45
L	at Duke	3-31
W	MARYLAND	31-0
W	EAST CAROLINA	35-20
W	NORTH CAROLINA (OT)	16-13
W	at Georgia Tech	24-17
L	MIAMI (OT)	17-24
L	at Wake Forest	17-28
L	CLEMSON	3-13
L	at Virginia Tech	14-17

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	16.1	114
Rushing	96.6	108
Passing	203.2	69
Total	299.8	105
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	21.7	38
Rushing	149.6	72
Passing	183.7	26
Total	333.3	42
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 7	- 0.58	94

DUKE BLUE DEVILS

NATIONAL RANK 71

ACC rank: 12 | Record: 4-8 | ACC record: 1-7 (6th, Coastal) | Stadium: Wallace Wade (33,941)

Blue Devils in A Box

COACH: David Cutcliffe — At Duke: 4-8, 1 year; overall: 48-37 overall, 7 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Kurt Roper and Matt Luke
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Mike MacIntyre and Marion Hobby
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1989, co-champions
LAST BOWL: 1994 season, Hall of Fame Bowl
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 5 offense, 5 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Thaddeus Lewis, RB Re'quan Boyette, WR Johnny Williams, WR Donovan Varner, DT Vince Oghobaase, DE Ayanga Okpokowuruk, LB Vincent Rey, S Matt Daniels
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: With a year of seasoning in Cutcliffe's system, the offense should post solid numbers, starting with three-year starter Lewis under center. The defense is getting faster, and the kicking game quickly has gone from liability to reliability.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Lewis must rely on an inexperienced offensive line for protection. The running game has struggled at times. The defense still hasn't reached the high standards set by ACC units and will remain below average until the pass rush and coverage improves.

OFFENSE

David Cutcliffe's pro-style offense revolves around the quarterback — just ask former students Peyton and Eli Manning. Last season, Duke quarterback Thaddeus Lewis earned second-team All-ACC honors for his handling of the offense.

And Lewis didn't really even have a complete handle on the entire playbook.

"I feel very comfortable now," Lewis said. "Now Coach can call anything, and I can manage the play. Being in the same system two years in a row, now it's just fun to go out there and play without thinking."

Even with the graduation of big-play receiver Eron Riley, Cutcliffe said the passing game has been elevated, due mainly to Lewis' grasp of it.

Lewis still has weapons, albeit young ones. Johnny Williams caught 30 passes and Donovan Varner caught 21 as true freshmen, and both appear capable of big things.

The return of senior Re'quan Boyette fuels the running game. Cutcliffe heaped praised on Boyette heading into the 2008 season, but Boyette suffered a knee injury in preseason practice that forced him to redshirt.

The key to the offense could be a line that returns just two starters — center Bryan Morgan and tackle Kyle Hill. Both are undersized overachievers who have bulked up.

DEFENSE

The Blue Devils have a bunch of holes to fill from a unit that held three opponents under 10 points for the first time since 1976, but few college players fill holes better than 6-6, 300-pound tackle Vince Oghobaase.

What Oghobaase does best is clog running lanes, but he also managed six sacks last season. The rest of the defensive returners, however, totaled just 8.5 sacks. To that end, the Blue Devils need senior end Ayanga Okpokowuruk to play up to his billing out of high school.

Departed linebacker Michael Tauiliili was a tackling machine for four seasons, but Duke does return the next best thing in senior Vincent Rey, the only active ACC player with a pair of 100-tackle seasons. He could put up huge numbers with Tauiliili gone, but he can't do it alone.

The other two likely starters at linebacker — Abraham Kromah and Damian Thornton — combined for a mere 19 tackles a year ago.

The Devils are thin in the secondary and will need young, promising players to step up and help veterans Leon Wright at corner and Catron Gainey at safety.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Nick Maggio made 11 of 14 field goals and every PAT last season. The Devils also return punter Kevin Jones, who ranked second in the ACC in average a year ago.

Duke must break in a new long snapper and holder, and it must find a breakaway threat in the kick return game to replace Jabari Marshall, the ACC's career leader in kickoff return yards.

OVERVIEW

The Blue Devils clearly are on the rise under Cutcliffe, but it's a lengthy climb given where they were as a program. Duke should be as consistently competitive as it has been since its last bowl bid in 1994, but the roster's talent level — and certainly its depth — hasn't had time to catch up with the rest of the conference.

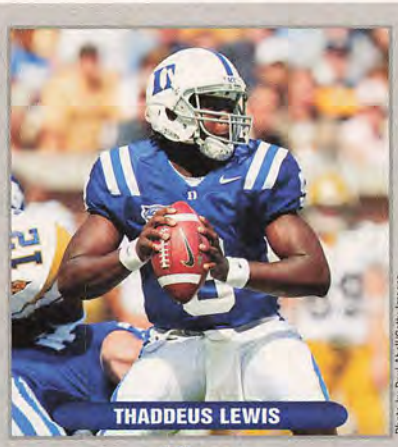

THADDEUS LEWIS

Photo by Paul Abell/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Thaddeus Lewis***	**6-2**	**200**	**Sr.**
	Sean Renfree	6-3	210	Fr.
RB	Re'quan Boyette	5-10	200	Sr.
	Jay Hollingsworth	5-11	185	So.
WR	**Johnny Williams***	**5-10**	**190**	**So.**
	Tony Foster	6-1	170	Fr.
WR	Donovan Varner	5-9	170	So.
	Matt Pridemore	5-11	190	Jr.
WR	Sheldon Bell	6-4	200	Jr.
	Austin Kelly	6-3	195	Jr.
TE	**Brett Huffman***	**6-5**	**235**	**Jr.**
	Brandon King	6-2	240	Sr.
LT	**Kyle Hill***	**6-6**	**270**	**So.**
	Chris Shannon	6-5	270	So.
LG	Jarrod Holt	6-6	310	Sr.
	Robert Drum	6-6	280	Jr.
C	**Bryan Morgan***	**6-3**	**250**	**Jr.**
	Jeffrey Cowart	6-5	310	Jr.
RG	Brian Moore	6-4	280	Fr.
	Brandon Harper	6-3	310	Sr.
RT	Pontus Bondeson	6-6	275	Jr.
	Mitchell Lederman	6-8	305	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Ayanga Okpokowuruk***	**6-4**	**255**	**Sr.**
	Patrick Egboh	6-4	240	Jr.
DT	**Vince Oghobaase***	**6-6**	**300**	**Sr.**
	Charlie Hatcher	6-3	275	So.
NG	Kinney Rucker	6-2	290	Sr.
	Curtis Hazelton	6-3	260	Fr.
DE	Wesley Oglesby	6-6	245	Jr.
	Eriks Reks	6-5	225	So.
LB	**Vincent Rey***	**6-0**	**240**	**Sr.**
	Adam Banks	6-4	230	Jr.
LB	Abraham Kromah	6-1	215	Jr.
	Andrew Holomon	6-2	225	Jr.
LB	Damian Thornton	6-1	235	Jr.
	Michael Tooley	6-0	200	Jr.
CB	**Leon Wright***	**5-9**	**170**	**Sr.**
	Chris Rwabukamba	6-0	175	Jr.
CB	Lee Butler	5-10	180	So.
	Zach Greene	5-10	170	Fr.
S	**Catron Gainey***	**6-2**	**205**	**Sr.**
	Jordon Byas	6-1	195	Fr.
S	Matt Daniels	6-1	195	So.
	Zack Asack	6-4	205	Sr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Nick Maggio***	**6-4**	**190**	**Jr.**
P	**Kevin Jones***	**6-3**	**200**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	RICHMOND
Sept. 12	at Army
Sept. 19	at Kansas
Sept. 26	N.C. CENTRAL
Oct. 3	VIRGINIA TECH
Oct. 10	at NC State
Oct. 24	MARYLAND
Oct. 31	at Virginia
Nov. 7	at North Carolina
Nov. 14	GEORGIA TECH
Nov. 21	at Miami
Nov. 28	WAKE FOREST

2008 Results

(4-8, 1-7)

W	JAMES MADISON	31-7
L	NORTHWESTERN	20-24
W	NAVY	41-31
W	VIRGINIA	31-3
L	at Georgia Tech	0-27
L	MIAMI	31-49
W	at Vanderbilt	10-7
L	at Wake Forest (OT)	30-33
L	NC STATE	17-27
L	at Clemson	7-31
L	at Virginia Tech	3-14
L	NORTH CAROLINA	20-28

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	20.1	101
Rushing	106.2	103
Passing	197.7	75
Total	303.8	102
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	23.4	50
Rushing	151.5	74
Passing	205.4	56
Total	356.9	60
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 5	+ 0.42	33

One More Time: Is This the Year Trojans Get Dethroned?

Vulnerability is all relative, of course. USC's vulnerability isn't quite the same as, say, Washington State's.

But if there was ever a year in the past half-decade for someone other than USC to win the Pac-10, this might be it.

The Trojans return just 12 starters, and only three on defense. Most notable of the departures would be quarterback Mark Sanchez, who would have been a strong Heisman Trophy candidate had he not made the surprising decision to declare early for the NFL, which left head coach Pete Carroll looking about as happy as an AIG executive.

The Trojans also lost both coordinators. Offensive coordinator Steve Sarkisian was hired as head coach at Washington, and he used a boatful of cash to get defensive coordinator Nick Holt to go with him.

But while the Trojans may have more question marks than usual, every team in the Pac-10 has its own set of issues, leaving USC as still the team to beat.

Cal and Oregon loom as contenders, each with the one thing USC doesn't have — experience at quarterback. But much like at other schools in the league, Cal's Kevin Riley wasn't even assured the starting job out of spring practice.

But with 15 returning starters, led by RB Jahvid Best — the last name signifies that he's also the Best player in the Pac-10 this year — the Bears could get another chance to dethrone the Trojans.

Oregon, with new coach Chip Kelly, is essentially starting over on its offensive line, and lost its three best defensive players. Kelly implemented the team's new spread offense so well the past two years that he was anointed Mike Bellotti's successor-in-waiting during the season, then took over when Bellotti retired to become the school's athletic director in the spring.

The hope is that Kelly will keep things running as smoothly as when Bellotti made the same transition from Rich Brooks in 1995.

After those three teams, it's hard to find a legitimate contender for the title in a Pac-10 that may have as few sure things as ever — just 16 of the 44 players named first- or second-team all-conference a year ago return.

Pac-10 Conference Picks

	GOOD NEWS	BAD NEWS	OUR CALL
1. USC	Veteran line, skill players should make up for inexperience at QB.	One of Pete Carroll's least experienced defenses; will miss Mark Sanchez.	Until further notice, this is still the team to beat.
2. Cal	15 returning starters, including the league's most dangerous player, Jahvid Best.	QB situation uncertain; Bears have trouble in big games, especially on the road.	It will take a step up by QB Kevin Riley, but they could put more than a scare into Trojans.
3. Oregon	Players and head coach change but system remains; Jeremiah Masoli a capable leader.	Just 10 starters return. And will they miss Mike Bellotti most of all?	Consistent talent keeps Ducks contending ... assuming O-line comes through.
4. Oregon State	Brothers Rodgers and QB Lyle Moevao make OSU offense very dangerous.	Just three starters return on defense, and O-line also took a hit.	Give Mike Riley benefit of the doubt and assume Beavers will find a way into a bowl.
5. Arizona	Mike Stoops has quieted the critics (for now) and defense should prove rugged.	The offense has to replace a lot of firepower (WR Mike Thomas, QB Willie Tuitama).	Offensive losses and tougher schedule put Cats back on bowl fringe.
6. UCLA	Sixteen returning starters, nine on an offense that just has to be better.	Breaking in another new QB, and O-line still a big question.	One of Pac-10's best defenses could have UCLA back in the bowl business.
7. Stanford	Seven home games, a veteran team, and solid running game could offer breakthrough.	Uncertainty at quarterback doesn't help shaky passing attack.	Cardinal is close, and some good (Andrew) Luck could get them to a bowl.
8. Arizona State	League schedule is favorable; Dennis Erickson teams don't stay down long.	Quarterback Rudy Carpenter's gone, and running game still a mystery.	Balance of Pac-10 has Devils within reach of fourth place.
9. Washington	Steve Sarkisian has brought a new energy and Jake Locker is back from injury.	Secondary, OL may prove that coaching wasn't only reason for 0-12 mark in '08.	More competitive, maybe even an upset or two, but still a long road back to the top.
10. Washington St.	Second year in Paul Wulff's system will help, as should influx of new talent.	No proven playmakers on offense; defense still has major holes everywhere.	Won't give up 58 or more points seven times again, but won't win much, either.

Lindy's 2009 ALL-PAC-10 Team

OFFENSE - First Team

QB	Jeremiah Masoli	Jr.	Oregon
RB	Jahvid Best	Jr.	Cal
RB	Jacquizz Rodgers	So.	Oregon State
WR	Damian Williams	Jr.	USC
WR	James Rodgers	Jr.	Oregon State
TE	Rob Gronkowski	Jr.	Arizona
C	Kristofer O'Dowd	Jr.	USC
OL	Chris Marinelli	Sr.	Stanford
OL	Charles Brown	Sr.	USC
OL	Jeff Byers	Sr.	USC
OL	Mike Tepper	Sr.	Cal
AP	Terrence Austin	Sr.	UCLA
PK	Kai Forbath	Jr.	UCLA

DEFENSE - First Team

DL	Brian Price	Jr.	UCLA
DL	Daniel Te'o-Nesheim	Sr.	Washington
DL	Dexter Davis	Sr.	Arizona State
DL	Everson Griffen	Jr.	USC
LB	Reggie Carter	Sr.	UCLA
LB	Keaton Kristick	Sr.	Oregon State
LB	Mike Nixon	Sr.	Arizona State
DB	Taylor Mays	Sr.	USC
DB	Syd'Quan Thompson	Sr.	Cal
DB	Alterraun Verner	Sr.	UCLA
DB	Walter Thurmond III	Sr.	Oregon
P	Bryan Anger	So.	Cal

OFFENSE - Second Team

QB	Jake Locker	Jr.	Washington
RB	LeGarrette Blount	Sr.	Oregon
RB	Stafon Johnson	Jr.	USC
WR	D'Andre Goodwin	Jr.	Washington
WR	Chris McGaha	Sr.	Arizona State
TE	Ed Dickson	Sr.	Oregon
C	Colin Baxter	Jr.	Arizona
OL	Kenny Alfred	Sr.	WSU
OL	Shawn Lauvao	Sr.	Arizona State
OL	Allen Smith	Jr.	Stanford
OL	Mitchell Schwartz	So.	Cal
AP	Kyle Williams	Sr.	Arizona State
PK	Thomas Weber	Jr.	Arizona State

DEFENSE - Second Team

DL	Tyson Alualu	Sr.	Cal
DL	Will Tukuafu	Sr.	Oregon
DL	Lawrence Guy	So.	Arizona State
DL	Stephen Paea	Jr.	Oregon State
LB	Mason Foster	Jr.	Washington
LB	Akeem Ayers	So.	UCLA
LB	Spencer Paysinger	Jr.	Oregon
DB	Josh Pinkard	Sr.	USC
DB	Devin Ross	Sr.	Arizona
DB	T.J. Ward	Sr.	Oregon
DB	Omar Bolden	Jr.	Arizona State
P	Keenyn Crier	Jr.	Arizona

Oregon State lost much of the defense that (other than one blowup against Oregon) generally looked like the second-best in the conference. The return of two QBs with starting experience, Lyle Moevao and Sean Canfield, gives the Beavers the edge on the rest, along with what is now an expectation of winning." OSU has won 29 games the past three seasons.

Arizona is coming off its first winning season in 10 years. The defense will improve, but the loss of quarterback Willie Tuitama seems to have the Wildcats doing no better than holding steady.

If UCLA can find an offensive line and a quarterback, the Bruins could make a swift climb in the second season for head coach Rick Neuheisel, thanks to a salty defense.

Stanford came close to a breakthrough last season and is hoping it comes this year in the third campaign for coach Jim Harbaugh. And with 15 position starters returning, there is reason for optimism. The key will be whether redshirt freshman quarterback Andrew Luck, who moved past Tavita Pritchard in spring practice, can add life to the offense.

Arizona State was a disappointment in its second year under head coach Dennis Erickson, and has to replace quarterback Rudy Carpenter. An athletic defense and a revamped offensive line should have the Sun Devils as competitive as any of the second-tier Pac-10 teams.

Washington is starting over with rookie head coach Sarkisian. He has more pieces in place to make a significant rise than one might think, notably junior quarterback Jake Locker, as talented as any player in the conference. But the Huskies figure to still be a year or two away from bowl contention.

Washington State was abysmal in the first year under coach Paul Wulff. While another year in the system and the influx of some talented newcomers mean WSU should be more competitive, it's hard to see the Cougs escaping the cellar.

— Bob Condotta

Most Valuable Player

Jahvid Best
RB, Cal

Offensive Player of the Year

Jacquizz Rodgers
RB, Oregon State

Defensive Player of the Year

Taylor Mays
DB, USC

Newcomer of the Year

Kevin Prince
QB, UCLA

HONOR ROLL

Most accurate passer	Sean Canfield	Oregon State
Strongest arm	Jake Locker	Washington
Best scrambler	Jeremiah Masoli	Oregon
Coolest in the clutch	Lyle Moevao, QB	Oregon State
Toughest to bring down	Jake Locker, QB	Washington
Best hands	Rob Gronkowski, TE	Arizona
Most dangerous deep threat	Damian Williams, WR	USC
Best pass blocker	Charles Brown, OT	USC
Best run blocker	Chris Marinelli, OT	Stanford
Best cover corner	Alterraun Verner	UCLA
Best pass rusher	Dexter Davis, DE	Arizona State
Special teams demon	Allen Bradford	USC

The Big Ones

Sept. 3	
Oregon at Boise State	Ducks try to get Thursday night revenge for '08 shootout loss in Eugene.
Sept. 5	
LSU at Washington	Not exactly a smooth landing for Steve Sarkisian's UW debut.
Sept. 12	
Purdue at Oregon	Ducks barely escaped with their lives last year in West Lafayette.
UCLA at Tennessee	Think Vols want a little payback for what happened in L.A. last year?
USC at Ohio State	Think Buckeyes want a little payback for what happened in L.A. last year?
Sept. 19	
Utah at Oregon	Battle to decide which West Coast team runs the spread the best.
Kansas State at UCLA	Could be a swing game for UCLA's bowl hopes.
Cal at Minnesota	Second game in Minnesota's new on-campus stadium tricky for Bears.
USC at Washington	Sarkisian (and DC Nick Holt) test their mettle (and players) against Carroll.
Sept. 26	
Arizona State at Georgia	At least Devils won't have to worry about Moreno, Stafford this year.
Cal at Oregon	We'll find out early who the true contender for USC's crown is.
Oct. 3	
USC at Cal	If Bears win in Eugene the previous week, this will be a monster game.
Washington at Notre Dame	Willingham couldn't survive long enough to get a return to South Bend.
Oct. 17	
USC at Notre Dame	USC won last two, 38-0, 38-3. Weis might not survive another one like that.
Oct. 24	
Oregon State at USC	Beavers not usually as pesky for Trojans in Los Angeles.
Oct. 31	
USC at Oregon	Trojans held Ducks to 10 points last year, 32 below average.
WSU vs. Notre Dame (San Antonio)	One of four games against Pac-10 teams for Irish this year.
Nov. 7	
Oregon State at Cal	Beavers won in Berkeley two years ago when Bears were No. 2 in country.
Nov. 14	
UCLA at WSU	Rick Neuheisel returns to Palouse, where he did well as UW's head coach.
Nov. 21	
Cal at Stanford	The only natural rivalry game on what used to be rivalry weekend.
Nov. 28	
WSU at Washington	Will sniping between administrations of two schools filter to the field?
UCLA at USC	Not much of a rivalry lately as Troy has won nine of 10.
Arizona at Arizona State	Arizona's 31-10 win last year was its largert margin in the series since 1964.
Dec. 3	
Oregon State at Oregon	Civil War now a Thursday night affair. Rose Bowl could be on line again.
Dec. 5	
Cal at Washington	Best rushed for 311 yards in about 35 minutes against UW last season.

STAFON JOHNSON

Photo by Christian Petersen/Getty Images

Bowl Connection

Champion
BCS title game if ranked #1 or 2, otherwise Rose
Pac-10 #2
Holiday vs. Big 12 #3
Pac-10 #3
Sun vs. Big 12/Big East or Notre Dame
Pac-10 #4
Emerald vs. ACC #4-7
Pac-10 #5
Las Vegas vs. Mountain West
Pac-10 #6
Poinsettia vs. Mountain West

Top 10 NFL Talent

1. Taylor Mays	FS	USC	Sr.	Didn't need to stay another year, but did anyway.
2. Jahvid Best	RB	Cal	Jr.	Size, durability might be issues, but boy can he run.
3. Rob Gronkowski	TE	Arizona	Jr.	The total package (6-6, 265, great hands) at tight end.
4. Walter Thurmond III	CB	Oregon	Sr.	Size (6-, 180) and production will entice scouts.
5. Brian Price	DT	UCLA	Jr.	Best interior DL in conference.
6. Everson Griffen	DE	USC	Jr.	Hasn't done much in college yet, but NFL is waiting.
7. Jake Locker	QB	Washington	Jr.	Stock will skyrocket if Sarkisian can refine his talents.
8. Kris O'Dowd	C	USC	Jr.	Pac-10's best offensive lineman?
9. Ed Dickson	TE	Oregon	Sr.	He's 6-5, 240 and runs a 4.6 40. Also has good hands.
10. Alterraun Verner	CB	UCLA	Sr.	Few play the ball better or more aggessively.

USC: USC once again had the best class in the Pac-10, and this year's class has plenty of stars outside of quarterback Matt Barkley - who spent time as Rivals.com's No. 1 player in the nation. Patrick Hall is one of the nation's best athletes, and he should star at safety in the future. Defensive end Devon Kennard might have ascended to the No. 1 ranking in the nation if not for a knee injury. Then there are other playmakers such as T.J. McDonald, Hebron Fangupo, Kevin Graf and John Martinez.

UCLA: There's no question there is more talent heading to Westwood than in years past. The National Signing Day switch of Randall Carroll from USC to UCLA certainly helped. The Bruins did a tremendous job of filling needs, especially at defensive back with Marlon Pollard, Stanjarivus McKay and Sheldon Price. The offensive line class, headlined by Greg Capella and Nik Abele, is one of the best. UCLA looks as if it could've found its quarterback of the future with Richard Brehaut.

STANFORD: The Cardinal's recruiting ranking averaged 51st in the nation the past three seasons, but coach Jim Harbaugh put Stanford in line for a top-25 class for the first time since 2003. Stanford signed eight four-star players and 12 three-star recruits. Stanford expects big things from receiver Jemari Roberts and running back Tyler Gaffney. Linebacker Shayne Skov from New York was one of the nation's most heavily recruited linebackers.

ARIZONA STATE: With it being a banner year in the state, ASU did a tremendous job in its backyard. The only big miss was Devon Kennard, who signed with USC. In the end, the majority of top in-state recruits stayed to play for the Sun Devils. Arizona State also did a nice job in the Los Angeles area, and linebacker Vontaze Burfict was a huge National Signing Day coup. Four-star defensive tackle Corey Adams was a must-get for Arizona State. He is a local kid who ranked in the Rivals100.

OREGON: Oregon's class is solid, but Ducks fans can't help but think about what might have been; Oregon finished second for many top prospects. Oregon did quite well at linebacker and defensive back. The offensive line was a major need and was addressed with quality prospects such as Karrington Armstrong and Jamaal Burrell. Oregon expects four-star junior college linebacker Bryson Littlejohn to make an immediate impact.

CALIFORNIA: While this is a smaller group compared to others in the conference, it has headline recruits such as four-star lineman Deandre Coleman, four-star linebacker Jarred Price, four-star quarterback Allan Bridgford and four-star cornerback Steve Williams. The Bears did a nice job with offensive linemen and defensive backs. They also landed one of the nation's best running backs in Dasarte Yarnway.

ARIZONA: This class is one of Mike Stoops' best all-around efforts. The group filled a lot of needs, especially at running back and linebacker. Four-star linebacker Trevor Erno has the tools to be a star, and four-star all-purpose back Daniel Jenkins should be a nice fit. Landing safety Adam Hall was a must. He is a local guy from Tucson, and his signing sends a message that Arizona still is going to be a force to deal with in-state.

OREGON STATE: As with Arizona's, this class gets overshadowed by others in the conference. But Beavers coaches do a tremendous job of evaluating players and making sure that the kids they recruit fit their style of play. There will be a massive influx of athletic ability with this group. Guard Michael Philipp was about as big as it gets for any team in the conference. He was the No. 1-ranked player at his position in the nation.

WASHINGTON: Washington made up a lot of ground late under new coach Steve Sarkisian. A dismal season on the field made it tough, but Sarkisian's energy attracted a lot of attention late. He and his staff were able to land some quality prospects in the 11th hour. The 2010 class will be when we see the Huskies make an impact with top Washington talent.

WASHINGTON STATE: If there were any year Washington State could make a move up the charts in the Pac-10, it was going to be this year. It was the second year under coach Paul Wulff, and there was plenty of turmoil in Seattle. In the end, Wazzu did finish with three of the top five in-state players.

TOP 20 INCOMING RECRUITS

RK	NAME	HT/WT	POS	HOMETOWN/SCHOOL	COLLEGE
1.	Matt Barkley	6-3/226	QB	Santa Ana (Calif.) Mater Dei	USC
2.	Devon Kennard	6-3/257	DE	Phoenix Desert Vista	USC
3.	Vontaze Burfict	6-2/244	LB	Corona (Calif.) Centennial	Arizona State
4.	Patrick Hall	6-1/181	ATH	Ventura (Calif.) St. Bonaventure	USC
5.	T.J. McDonald	6-2/200	DB	Fresno (Calif.) Edison	USC
6.	Randall Carroll	5-10/175	ATH	Los Angeles Cathedral	UCLA
7.	Cliff Harris	6-0/165	DB	Fresno (Calif.) Edison	Oregon
8.	Shayne Skov	6-2/235	LB	Pawling (N.Y.) Trinity Pawling	Stanford
9.	Xavier Su'a Filo	6-4/285	OL	Provo (Utah) Timpview	UCLA
10.	Michael Philipp	6-3/320	OL	San Bernardino (Calif.) Arroyo Valley	Oregon State
11.	Jarvis Jones	6-3/226	DE	Columbus (Ga.) Carver	USC
12.	Kevin Graf	6-6/301	OL	Agoura (Calif.) High	USC
13.	Hebron Fangupo	6-2/330	DT	Walnut (Calif.) Mt. San Antonio College	USC
14.	Corey Adams	6-3/277	DT	Scottsdale (Ariz.) Saguaro	Arizona State
15.	Morrell Presley	6-4/215	WR	Carson (Calif.) High	UCLA
16.	Byron Moore	6-0/188	DB	Harbor City (Calif.) Narbonne	USC
17.	John Martinez	6-2/264	OL	Salt Lake City Cottonwood	USC
18.	Deandre Coleman	6-4/295	DT	Seattle Garfield	California
19.	Stanley Hasiak	6-6/320	OL	Kapolei (Hawaii) High	UCLA
20.	Jawanza Starling	6-2/195	DB	Tallahassee (Fla.) Lincoln	USC

TOP NEWCOMER:

There is no clear-cut leader for the starting quarterback spot at USC, which leaves the door open for Matt Barkley. He was the nation's best quarterback and has the strongest arm in the 2009 class. That, plus his experience in a pro-style offense in high school, makes him a serious candidate to play early for the Trojans.

TOP SLEEPER:

Idaho hardly is a recruiting hotbed, but Washington State should be excited about linebacker Darren Markle. He always seems to be around the football.

LIKELY TO BE THE BEST NFL PLAYER:

USC signee T.J. McDonald has NFL bloodlines (his father was a star in the NFL), and he has all the tools to be a special player in his own right. A ball-hawking safety, McDonald has a knack for making big plays when they're needed, plus he has a frame and a body that will allow him to adjust easily to the college game – and someday the pro game, too.

NO. 1 SIGNING COUP:

A lot of people expected Michael Philipp to sign with Arizona, where he could play with his brother. Not many pegged Oregon State as his eventual destination. But line coach Mike Cavanaugh did a tremendous job recruiting Philipp and got him to sign with Oregon State. As one of the nation's best offensive linemen, Philipp has the tools to play immediately.

BIGGEST MISS:

To win at Washington State and Washington, you have to keep your top players at home, but that didn't happen as much as the Cougars' and Huskies' coaching staffs would have liked. Both lost out on the top player in the state, two-way lineman Deandre Coleman, who signed with California. They also lost out to Oregon State on the state's No. 3 player, offensive lineman Grant Enger.

BEST RECRUITING STAFF:

It's easy to say USC has the best recruiting staff in the Pac-10, but you could also make an argument the Trojans are the best recruiters in the nation. USC has put the clamps down on a majority of the top talent in Los Angeles, and the Trojans also have the national pull to be able to reel in stars from Florida and Georgia. The Trojans definitely are one of the elite recruiting programs nationally.

USC TROJANS

NATIONAL RANK 4

Pac-10 rank: 1 | Record: 12-1 | Pac-10 record (8-1, 1st) | Stadium: L.A. Coliseum (92,000)

Trojans in A Box

COACH: Pete Carroll — At USC and overall: 88-15, 8 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jeremy Bates
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Rocky Seto
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2008
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2000
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 9 offense, 3 defense
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Aaron Corp, TB Stafon Johnson, TB Joe McKnight, WR Damian Williams, DE Everson Griffen, LB Malcolm Smith, FS Taylor Mays, CB/SS Josh Pinkard
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Trojans return almost their entire offense and go two-deep at every position, including quarterback, where Corp and freshman Matt Barkley went toe-to-toe in the spring. All six tailbacks return. The secondary features Mays and Pinkard along with experienced cornerbacks Shareece Wright and Kevin Thomas.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The defense is largely untested at linebacker and a couple of spots on the line. And quarterback looms as a question mark, at least early. It would also be nice if USC could identify a go-to tailback. The Trojans must find a reliable punter and select a kicker.

OFFENSE

Whether Aaron Corp keeps the job or freshman phenom Matt Barkley plays quarterback, the situation will be more clear cut than who plays tailback.

The committee approach seems likely again with Stafon Johnson, Joe McKnight and C.J. Gable (technically, the returning starter) all expecting to play. But Allen Bradford returns from hip surgery and wants a chance.

Sophomore Marc Tyler might eventually be the best back, but he needs to leapfrog the veterans. And there's freshman Curtis McNeal, who impressed Pete Carroll in the spring with his toughness despite being 5-6.

A likely scenario is Johnson starting and getting the conventional carries while McKnight gets used in different parts of the field for his speed, much like Reggie Bush.

The position is important because Carroll wants a balanced attack and the running game needs to take pressure off Corp. That could happen because of a deep, versatile, experienced line.

There's much less confusion at receiver, where junior Damian Williams is the go-to guy after catching 58 passes for 869 yards with nine touchdowns. Things might even be improved here since the other starter, junior Ronald Johnson, is USC's best deep threat.

A lot is expected of assistant coach Jeremy Bates, who will call plays after spending the past three seasons with the Denver Broncos. To take advantage of Corp's good wheels, Bates called bootlegs in the spring.

DEFENSE

Former super recruit Everson Griffen locked down a defensive end spot, but sophomore Malik Jackson should also find a role in the rotation with his quickness.

The other big move was switching defensive tackle Armond Armstead to end without sacrificing any speed or quickness.

The interior features last year's starter, Christian Tupou, who shares the spot with emerging starter Jurrell Casey, who is built like former All-American Mike Patterson. Averell Spicer starts at the other tackle.

Linebacker will feature an entirely new unit of Chris Galippo, Malcolm Smith and Michael Morgan. But they have all played at least two years in the system, so they are not exactly learning what to do.

The secondary is so experienced, it could almost function on auto pilot. Besides All-American safety Taylor Mays, Josh Pinkard returns. He has started at safety and cornerback.

Cornerback is also stacked. The team's fastest player, Shareece Wright, is back after missing last season with a neck injury. The other starter should be fifth-year senior Kevin Thomas, unless Pinkard switches back to cornerback, where he started last year.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The most important improvement here is the hiring of special teams coach Brian Schneider, who was previously with the Oakland Raiders.

Walk-on Joe Houston will probably be the kicker. But USC welcomes junior college transfer Jake Harfman in the fall and he will get a chance to win the kicking and punting jobs.

OVERVIEW

USC's seasons never change much under Carroll, as a national championship is always a possibility. If the Trojans get consistent play at quarterback and the linebackers are able to stop the run, there's no reason for a drop-off and every reason to expect an eighth consecutive Pac-10 title ... and a BCS run.

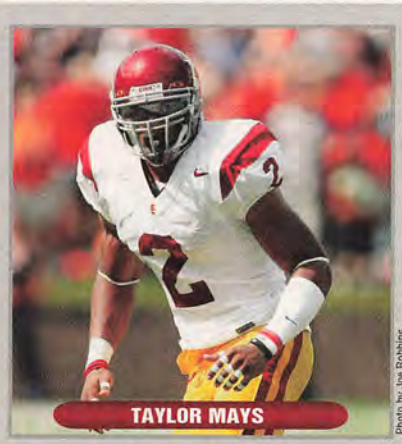

TAYLOR MAYS

Photo by Joe Robbins

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Aaron Corp	6-4	195	So.
	Matt Barkley	6-3	220	Fr.
TB	Stafon Johnson	5-11	215	Sr.
	Joe McKnight	6-0	200	Jr.
FB	**Stanley Havili***	**6-0**	**225**	**Jr.**
	D.J. Shoemate	6-0	220	So.
WR	**Damian Williams***	**6-1**	**190**	**Jr.**
	Brice Butler	6-3	215	Fr.
WR	Ronald Johnson	6-1	185	Jr.
	David Ausberry	6-4	235	Jr.
TE	**Anthony McCoy***	**6-5**	**255**	**Sr.**
	Blake Ayles	6-5	255	So.
LT	**Charles Brown***	**6-6**	**295**	**Sr.**
	Butch Lewis*	**6-5**	**300**	**Jr.**
LG	**Jeff Byers***	**6-4**	**285**	**Sr.**
	Zack Heberer	6-5	300	Jr.
C	**Kris O'Dowd***	**6-5**	**300**	**Jr.**
	Jeff Byers	6-4	285	Sr.
RG	**Alex Parsons***	**6-4**	**300**	**Sr.**
	Nick Howell	6-5	280	Sr.
RT	Tyron Smith	6-6	270	So.
	Matt Kalil	6-6	290	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Armond Armstead	6-5	290	So.
	Wes Horton	6-5	245	Fr.
DT	Jurrell Casey	6-1	280	So.
	Christian Tupou*	**6-2**	**280**	**Jr.**
DT	Averell Spicer	6-2	295	Sr.
	Derek Simmons	6-4	285	Jr.
DE	Everson Griffen	6-3	265	Jr.
	Malik Jackson	6-5	230	So.
LB	Malcolm Smith	6-1	225	Jr.
	Jordan Campbell	5-11	230	So.
LB	Chris Galippo	6-2	255	So.
	Uona Kaveinga	6-1	235	So.
LB	Michael Morgan	6-4	220	Jr.
	Luthur Brown	6-2	235	Sr.
CB	Shareece Wright	6-0	180	Jr.
	T.J. Bryant	6-1	190	So.
CB	Kevin Thomas	6-1	185	Sr.
	Marshall Jones	6-0	185	Jr.
SS	**Josh Pinkard***	**6-2**	**210**	**Sr.**
	Will Harris	6-1	200	Sr.
FS	**Taylor Mays***	**6-3**	**230**	**Sr.**
	Drew McAllister	6-1	200	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Joe Houston	5-8	170	Jr.
P	Billy O'Malley	6-1	195	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	SAN JOSE STATE
Sept. 12	at Ohio State
Sept. 19	at Washington
Sept. 26	WASHINGTON STATE
Oct. 3	at California
Oct. 17	at Notre Dame
Oct. 24	OREGON STATE
Oct. 31	at Oregon
Nov. 7	at Arizona State
Nov. 14	STANFORD
Nov. 28	UCLA
Dec. 5	ARIZONA

2008 Results

(12-1, 8-1)

W	at Virginia	52-7
W	OHIO STATE	35-3
L	at Oregon State	21-27
W	OREGON	44-10
W	ARIZONA STATE	28-0
W	at Washington State	69-0
W	at Arizona	17-10
W	WASHINGTON	56-0
W	CALIFORNIA	17-3
W	at Stanford	45-23
W	NOTRE DAME	38-3
W	at UCLA	28-7
	Rose Bowl	
W	vs. Penn State	38-24

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	37.5	14
Rushing	194.9	22
Passing	259.9	22
Total	454.7	11
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	9.00	1
Rushing	87.4	5
Passing	134.4	1
Total	221.8	2
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 7	+ 0.54	25

CALIFORNIA BEARS

NATIONAL RANK 12

Pac-10 rank: 2 | Record: 9-4 | Pac-10 Record: 6-3 (4th) | Stadium: Memorial (71,799)

Bears in A Box

COACH: Jeff Tedford — At Cal and overall 59-30, 7 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Andy Ludwig
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bob Gregory
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2006, co-champions
LAST TIME DIDNT GO BOWLING: 2002
RETURNING STARTERS: 17; 7 offense 8 defense, punter, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Kevin Riley, TB Jahvid Best, OT Mike Tepper, WR Marvin Jones, DE Cameron Jordan, DE Tyson Alualu, LB Mike Mohamed, CB Syd'Quan Thompson
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Super-swift tailbacks Best and Shane Vereen, who combined for 2,295 rushing yards last season, are capable of scoring from anywhere. The Bears have deep, veteran offensive and defensive lines. The secondary has four returning starters, including lockdown cornerback Thompson.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Riley was unable to win the quarterback job in spring practice. His backup, Brock Mansion, has limited experience. Cal's receiving corps hasn't proven it can catch the ball consistently or develop chemistry with Riley. Questions about the placekicking linger.

OFFENSE

The Bears have a first-class tailback tandem in Jahvid Best and Shane Vereen, who combined to average 187 yards per game last season. Whether they exceed that total in '09 depends largely on the quarterbacks.

Tedford won't name a starter until well into training camp, and possibly not until the week of the season opener.

"Once we get to camp, we'll see if one of them can separate," he said.

Junior Kevin Riley must improve his accuracy and decision making, but he's the favorite for the simple fact he has seven career starts and 277 career passes. Sophomore Brock Mansion has zero and six, respectively, and redshirt freshman Beau Sweeney has no college experience.

There is just as much uncertainty at receiver, where Cal has a bevy of talented veterans —Verran Tucker, Jeremy Ross, Nyan Boateng — but no proven playmakers and nobody who can consistently catch the ball or stretch defenses. The best of the group might be sophomore Marvin Jones, who was limited by injury in '08, but had a terrific spring.

Redshirt junior Chris Guarnero will step in for All-American center Alex Mack, a first-round NFL draft pick of the Cleveland Browns. Guarnero started at guard in '08 before a season-ending toe injury, but his natural position is center.

Some slight shuffling should result in veterans Chet Teofilo and Mark Boskovich starting at the two guard spots, with Mitchell Schwartz and Mike Tepper at tackle. Tepper missed last season because of a torn pectoral muscle.

DEFENSE

Cal might have the best defense in the Pac-10 this season.

Ends Cameron Jordan and Tyson Alualu are all-league material. Alualu (11 tackles for loss last season) is relentless. Jordan, although still learning to play the run, is more gifted physically (11 tackles for loss in limited playing time). Derrick Hill mans the middle, but Cal goes three deep at the position.

Mike Mohamed, whose 87 tackles was third most on the team last year despite not starting, is expected to start at the weak inside spot. Next to him in the middle, look for sophomore Mychal Kendricks. Returning starter Eddie Young will handle the strong outside spot, with Devin Bishop on the other side. At least, that's the plan entering training camp.

Cal has three well-regarded junior college linebackers — Jerome Meadows, Jarred Price and Ryan Davis — arriving in August expected to compete for playing time.

The Bears have a superb cornerback tandem in Darian Hagan and Syd'Quan Thompson, the all-leaguer who moves off the corner in nickel situations. Marcus Ezeff and Brett Johnson are expected to once again start at safety — if they can hold off Sean Cattouse.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Cal's special teams could be the best in the conference. It could become one of the best in the country if punter Bryan Anger has another fantastic year, Jahvid Best once again returns kicks and Syd'Quan Thompson again returns punts.

The question is, can either David Seawright or Giorgio Tavecchio provide consistency at placekicker?

OVERVIEW

Cal returns 15 starters on offense and defense from a team that won nine games. There's enough talent at the skill positions and experience and depth along the lines for the Bears to challenge for the Pac-10 championship. But they must have consistent and efficient quarterback play.

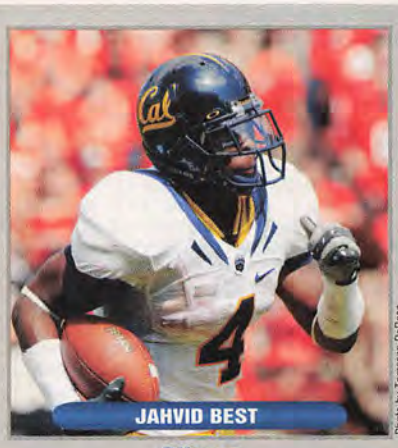


Photo by Tomasso DeRosa

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Kevin Riley***	**6-2**	**221**	**Jr.**
	Brock Mansion	6-5	237	So.
RB	**Jahvid Best***	**5-10**	**195**	**Jr.**
	Shane Vereen	5-10	198	So.
FB	Brian Holley	5-9	235	Sr.
	John Tyndall	6-3	236	So.
WR	Marvin Jones	6-2	190	So.
	Verran Tucker*	**6-1**	**205**	**Sr.**
WR	**Nyan Boateng***	**6-2**	**211**	**Sr.**
	Jeremy Ross	5-11	216	Jr.
TE	Tad Smith	6-5	254	Sr.
	Anthony Miller	6-3	258	So.
LT	Mike Tepper	6-7	319	Sr.
	Donovan Edwards*	**6-5**	**285**	**Jr.**
LG	**Mark Boskovich***	**6-4**	**304**	**Jr.**
	Matt Summers-Gavin	6-4	291	Fr.
C	Chris Guarnero	6-2	275	Jr.
	Dominic Galas	6-1	281	Fr.
RG	Chet Teofilo	6-3	329	Sr.
	Richard Fisher	6-4	290	Jr.
RT	**Mitchell Schwartz***	**6-6**	**335**	**So.**
	Justin Prueitt	6-4	278	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Tyson Alualu***	**6-3**	**295**	**Sr.**
	Trevor Guyton	6-3	293	So.
NG	**Derrick Hill***	**6-2**	**302**	**Jr.**
	Kendrick Payne	6-2	300	Fr.
DE	**Cameron Jordan***	**6-4**	**287**	**Jr.**
	Ernest Owusu	6-4	263	So.
LB	**Eddie Young***	**6-0**	**239**	**Sr.**
	Charles Johnson	6-1	232	Jr.
LB	Mike Mohamed	6-3	237	Jr.
	D.J. Holt	6-1	250	So.
LB	Mychal Kendricks	6-0	230	So.
	J.P. Hurrell	6-0	205	Fr.
LB	Devin Bishop	6-1	239	Sr.
	Chris Little	6-2	224	Fr.
CB	**Syd'Quan Thompson***	**5-9**	**191**	**Sr.**
	Bryant Nnabuife	6-1	200	Jr.
CB	**Darian Hagan***	**6-0**	**186**	**Jr.**
	Chris Conte	6-3	205	Jr.
S	**Marcus Ezeff***	**5-11**	**219**	**Sr.**
	D.J. Campbell	5-11	198	So.
S	**Brett Johnson***	**6-1**	**194**	**Sr.**
	Sean Cattouse	6-2	206	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Giorgio Tavecchio***	**5-8**	**173**	**So.**
P	**Bryan Anger***	**6-4**	**199**	**So.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	MARYLAND
Sept. 12	EASTERN WASHINGTON
Sept. 19	at Minnesota
Sept. 26	at Oregon
Oct. 3	USC
Oct. 17	at UCLA
Oct. 24	WASHINGTON STATE
Oct. 31	at Arizona State
Nov. 7	OREGON STATE
Nov. 14	ARIZONA
Nov. 21	at Stanford
Dec. 5	at Washington

2008 Results

	(9-4, 6-3)	
W	MICHIGAN STATE	38-31
W	at Washington State	66-3
L	at Maryland	27-35
W	COLORADO STATE	42-7
W	ARIZONA STATE	24-14
L	at Arizona	27-42
W	UCLA	41-20
W	OREGON	26-16
L	at USC	3-17
L	at Oregon State	21-34
W	STANFORD	37-16
W	WASHINGTON	48-7
	Emerald Bowl	
W	vs. Miami	24-17

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	32.6	27
Rushing	186.2	29
Passing	189.8	83
Total	376.0	47
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	19.9	23
Rushing	122.2	25
Passing	193.0	38
Total	315.2	26
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 15	+ 1.15	7

OREGON DUCKS

OREGON

NATIONAL RANK 15

Pac-10 rank: 3 | Record: 10-3 | Pac-10 record: 7-2 (T-2nd) | Stadium: Autzen (54,000)

Ducks in A Box

COACH: Chip Kelly — At Oregon and overall: 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mark Helfrich
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Nick Aliotti
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2001
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2004
RETURNING STARTERS: 10; 5 offense, 5 defense
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Jeremiah Masoli, RB LeGarrette Blount, TE Ed Dickson, WR Jeff Maehl, CB Walter Thurmond III, LB Casey Matthews, FS T.J. Ward, DE Will Tukuafu.
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Ducks should have one of the nation's most prolific offenses — again. The second seasons of Masoli and Blount will give the unit stable leadership, and the Ducks have a plethora of quality wide receivers. Oregon's defense has solid veterans at key positions.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The offensive line is the team's most inexperienced group, with only a combined 20 career starts. Could that short-circuit the spread-option? Oregon also is unsure at placekicker and punter.

OFFENSE

Jeremiah Masoli, who began last fall camp as the fifth-string quarterback, enters his junior year with a firm grip on the starting job after combining for 23 touchdowns last season.

He has versatile talents — 13 passing touchdowns, 10 rushing — and improving knowledge about the intricacies of the Ducks' spread-option offense. Masoli, who transferred from junior college after 2008 spring ball, finished the season with 1,744 passing yards and an Oregon quarterback-record 718 yards rushing.

Senior LeGarrette Blount is another junior college transfer who set a rushing record in his first season in Eugene. Playing behind now-departed Jeremiah Johnson (1,201 yards), Blount ran for 1,002 yards. He averaged 7.3 yards per carry and rushed for a single-season school-record 17 touchdowns.

The biggest question: Who does the blocking?

Right tackle C.E. Kaiser and left guard Bo Thran are the only returning starters on the line. Both missed most of the spring with injuries.

Jeff Maehl and Aaron Pflugrad are the top returning wide receivers, but the star of the spring was junior receiver Jamere Holland. The former USC sprinter was consistently breaking free from defenders in practice and has the potential to be Oregon's top deep threat.

Senior tight end Ed Dickson is a reliable target. He had a career-high 508 yards receiving last season, averaging 14.5 yards per catch.

DEFENSE

Senior cornerback Walter Thurmond III, who tied for the Pac-10 lead with five interceptions last season, was the defensive standout of spring.

Oregon's secondary should be tougher than last season. T.J. Ward epitomizes the physical prowess of the unit. The hard-hitting senior free safety led the Ducks with 101 tackles last season.

Oregon returns two of three starting linebackers in juniors Casey Matthews and Spencer Paysinger. Sophomore Eddie Pleasant looks to step in at strong-side linebacker, and junior college transfer Bryson Littlejohn should make an immediate impact.

The Ducks are led up front by senior end Will Tukuafu, who was fifth in the Pac-10 with 17.5 tackles for loss last season.

Brandon Bair had a strong spring to all but lock up one starting tackle spot. Simi Toeaina and Blake Ferras are in a close battle for the other tackle role.

Junior Kenny Rowe, who continues to make strides in his transition from linebacker, is the leading candidate to start at end opposite Tukuafu.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The kicking game is one of the biggest concerns for Oregon, which lost its starting placekicker and punter to graduation.

Senior Morgan Flint appeared to have the inside track at permanent placekicking duties after making 7 of 9 field goals in the final four games of last season. But Flint's inconsistent spring opened the competition to incoming freshman Mike Bowlin.

Junior Tim Taylor will face competition from freshman Jackson Rice at punter.

OVERVIEW

Expectations are high for the first season of the Chip Kelly era. With longtime coach Mike Bellotti now the school's athletic director, Kelly wasted little time in establishing a businesslike tone throughout the program.

Many key pieces return from last season's 10-win campaign, but the Ducks will need to keep their playmakers healthy and take advantage of their seven home games. That includes a visit from reigning Pac-10 champion USC, which lost the last time it played at Oregon in 2007.

LeGARRETTE BLOUNT

Photo by Tom Hauck/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Jeremiah Masoli***	**5-11**	**214**	**Jr.**
	Justin Roper	6-6	205	Jr.
RB	LeGarrette Blount	6-2	240	Sr.
	Andre Crenshaw	5-11	195	Sr.
WR	Jamere Holland	6-1	190	Jr.
	D.J. Davis	6-1	205	Jr.
WR	Aaron Pflugrad	5-10	174	Jr.
	Blake Cantu	6-0	191	Fr.
WR	**Jeff Maehl***	**6-1**	**178**	**Jr.**
	Chris Harper	6-2	230	So.
TE	**Ed Dickson***	**6-5**	**240**	**Sr.**
	Malachi Lewis	6-4	220	Jr.
LT	Darrion Weems	6-5	310	So.
	Charlie Carmichael	6-4	296	So.
LG	**Bo Thran***	**6-5**	**295**	**Jr.**
	Carson York	6-5	280	Fr.
C	Jordan Holmes	6-4	295	Jr.
	Max Forer	6-3	279	Jr.
RG	Mark Asper	6-7	320	So.
	Ramsen Golpashin	6-4	280	So.
RT	**C.E. Kaiser***	**6-4**	**290**	**Jr.**
	Nick Cody	6-5	270	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Will Tukuafu***	**6-4**	**279**	**Sr.**
	Terrell Turner	6-3	248	So.
DT	Simi Toeaina	6-4	308	Sr.
	Blake Ferras	6-6	290	Sr.
DT	Brandon Bair	6-7	250	Jr.
	Terrance Montgomery	6-2	291	Jr.
DE	Kenny Rowe	6-3	230	Jr.
	Zac Clark	6-2	256	Jr.
LB	**Spencer Paysinger***	**6-3**	**222**	**Jr.**
	Bryson Littlejohn	6-1	227	Jr.
LB	**Casey Matthews***	**6-2**	**235**	**Jr.**
	Brandon Hanna	6-2	235	So.
LB	Eddie Pleasant	5-11	225	So.
	Josh Kaddu	6-3	201	So.
CB	**Walter Thurmond III***	**6-0**	**185**	**Sr.**
	Kenjon Barner	5-11	180	Fr.
CB	Talmadge Jackson	5-10	182	Jr.
	Willie Glasper	5-11	184	Sr.
SS	Marvin Johnson	5-10	205	Jr.
	Javes Lewis	6-1	185	So.
FS	**T.J. Ward***	**5-11**	**201**	**Sr.**
	John Boyett	5-10	190	Fr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Morgan Flint	5-9	163	Sr.
P	Tim Taylor	5-11	182	Jr.

*** Returning Starters in Bold**

2009 Schedule

Sept. 3	at Boise State
Sept. 12	PURDUE
Sept. 19	UTAH
Sept. 26	CALIFORNIA
Oct. 3	WASHINGTON STATE
Oct. 10	at UCLA
Oct. 24	at Washington
Oct. 31	USC
Nov. 7	at Stanford
Nov. 14	ARIZONA STATE
Nov. 21	at Arizona
Dec. 3	OREGON STATE

2008 Results

(10-3, 7-2)

W	WASHINGTON	44-10
W	UTAH STATE	66-24
W	at Purdue (2OT)	32-26
L	BOISE STATE	32-37
W	at Washington State	63-14
L	at USC	10-44
W	UCLA	31-21
W	at Arizona State	54-20
L	at California	16-26
W	STANFORD	35-28
W	ARIZONA	55-45
W	at Oregon State	65-38
	Holiday Bowl	
W	vs. Oklahoma State	42-31

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	41.9	7
Rushing	280.1	2
Passing	204.8	67
Total	484.9	7
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	28.2	78
Rushing	119.4	23
Passing	270.2	111
Total	389.6	82
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 5	+ 0.38	35

OREGON STATE BEAVERS

NATIONAL RANK 31

Pac-10 rank: 4 | Record: 9-4 | Pac-10 record: 7-2 (T-2nd) | Stadium: Reser Stadium (45,674)

Beavers in A Box

COACH: Mike Riley — At Oregon State and overall: 56-42, 8 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Danny Langsdorf
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mark Banker
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2000, co-champs
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2005
RETURNING STARTERS: 11; 6 offense, 3 defense, punter, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Jacquizz Rodgers, WR James Rodgers, WR Darrell Catchings, WR Casey Kjos, LB Keaton Kristick, DT Stephen Paea, CB Tim Clark
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: It's all about offense this season. Expect a steady diet of All-American Jacquizz Rodgers pounding the ball between the tackles. The Beavers will also get the ball to his brother James Rodgers in any way possible. They are game-breakers.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: When the defense is rebuilding it tends to be trouble. A whole new secondary is the biggest concern. The last time this happened the Beavers were exploited with too many big plays. Add in three new defensive linemen, and the pass defense could be weak.

OFFENSE

Oregon State's big issue is the health of key players. Quarterback Lyle Moevao had shoulder surgery in March and was hoping for a midsummer return to throwing. How well and how quickly he comes back will determine the starter.

Sean Canfield is No. 1 … for now. He started two seasons ago but missed the end of his sophomore year and beginning of his junior season recovering from surgery on his throwing shoulder.

Moevao passed for 2,534 yards and 19 touchdowns last season, often coming up with big plays. The Beavers can win with either quarterback, having the kind of experience at the position lacking elsewhere in the Pac-10.

The star is running back Jacquizz Rodgers, who missed the last two games of the season with a fractured bone in his shoulder. He eased into spring practice and should be ready to go.

Older brother James Rodgers, a wide receiver, is Oregon State's other critical weapon. James Rodgers, who was back in the spring after missing the end of last season with a broken collarbone, gained 1,833 total yards and scored 10 touchdowns last season.

His outside running on fly sweeps spreads the defense so Jacquizz can duck and dart in between the tackles.

DEFENSE

Eight starters are gone, including the entire secondary.

The play at cornerback is crucial. Oregon State likes to leave its cornerbacks on an island, freeing up the front seven to stuff the run and pressure the quarterback.

The last time the Beavers broke in two new cornerbacks was 2005. The pass defense was 115th of 117 teams in the nation that season, allowing 298.7 yards a game.

Senior Tim Clark will be one starter. He had significant playing time in the past two seasons, filling in for injury or giving the starters a breather.

Three players will share the two safety spots, with Suaesi Tuimaunei leading the way. Cameron Collins and Lance Mitchell might share the other position.

Keaton Kristick, Keith Pankey and Dwight Roberson are seasoned outside linebackers. Pankey and Roberson share one side, while Kristick is the overall defensive leader. David Pa'aluhi is a first-time starting middle linebacker.

Defensive tackle Stephen Paea anchors the line. The rest of the line features inexperienced players rotating to help cover up each of their weaknesses.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Bruce Read returns as special teams coach after a two-year run with the Dallas Cowboys. He'll work with several returning players, including kicker Justin Kahut.

Punter Johnny Hekker came into his own in the Sun Bowl, earning Special Teams Player of the Game honors in the 3-0 victory over Pittsburgh.

OSU must find a punt returner and secondary kickoff returner. James Rodgers returned kicks last season and will get a look to see if he can handle punts.

OVERVIEW

Even with a revamped line, the offense should put up points behind the efforts of the Rodgers brothers. The defense is starting over in some places, and the young secondary might feel growing pains — although, luckily for the Beavers, this doesn't appear to be a great year for quarterbacks in the Pac-10.

Oregon State usually finds a way, and its experience at quarterback helps the Beavers separate a bit from the middle of the league.

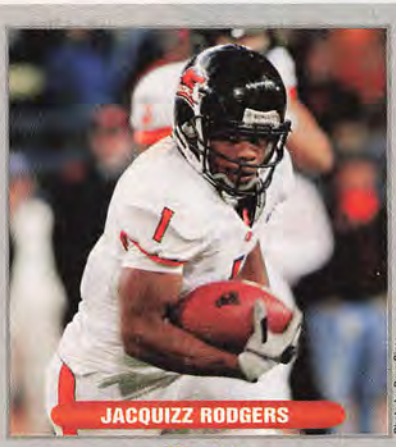

JACQUIZZ RODGERS

Photo by Dave Sizer

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Sean Canfield	6-4	220	Sr.
	Lyle Moevao*	**5-11**	**220**	**Sr.**
RB	**Jacquizz Rodgers***	**5-7**	**193**	**So.**
	Ryan McCants	6-1	240	So.
WR	Darrell Catchings	5-11	179	Jr.
	Jordan Bishop	6-3	195	Fr.
WR	**James Rodgers***	**5-7**	**185**	**Jr.**
	Damola Adeniji	6-3	215	Sr.
WR	Casey Kjos	6-2	215	Jr.
	Aaron Nichols	6-0	185	Jr.
TE	**Howard Croom***	**6-3**	**254**	**Sr.**
	Brady Camp	6-4	258	Jr.
LT	Timi Oshinowo	6-6	283	Jr.
	Colin Kelly	6-4	266	Fr.
LG	Ryan Pohl	6-3	285	Jr.
	Michael Lamb	6-3	276	So.
C	**Alex Linnenkohl***	**6-2**	**288**	**Jr.**
	Grant Johnson	6-3	265	So.
RG	**Gregg Peat***	**6-3**	**296**	**Sr.**
	Burke Ellis	6-4	249	So.
RT	Mike Remmers	6-4	286	So.
	Wilder McAndrews	6-4	290	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Kevin Frahm	6-2	255	So.
	Gabe Miller	6-3	231	Jr.
DT	**Stephen Paea***	**6-1**	**293**	**Jr.**
	Latu Moala	6-1	294	Sr.
DT	Brennan Olander	6-1	274	Jr.
	Sioeli Nau	6-2	307	Sr.
DE	Ben Terry	6-2	243	Sr.
	Taylor Henry	6-1	222	Fr.
LB	**Keaton Kristick***	**6-3**	**226**	**Sr.**
	Zane Norris	6-2	200	Fr.
LB	David Pa'aluhi	5-11	229	So.
	Tony Wilson	6-1	219	Fr.
LB	**Keith Pankey***	**6-0**	**211**	**Jr.**
	Dwight Roberson	6-0	238	Jr.
CB	Tim Clark	6-0	170	Sr.
	James Dockery	6-1	175	Jr.
CB	Patrick Henderson	5-10	175	Sr.
	Brandon Hardin	6-2	206	So.
SS	Suaesi Tuimaunei	6-1	208	Jr.
	Josh LaGrone	6-1	181	Fr.
FS	Cameron Collins	6-2	216	So.
	Lance Mitchell	6-2	205	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Justin Kahut***	**5-8**	**158**	**Jr.**
P	**Johnny Hekker***	**6-5**	**211**	**So.**

*** Returning Starters in Bold**

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	PORTLAND STATE
Sept. 12	at UNLV
Sept. 19	CINCINNATI
Sept. 26	ARIZONA
Oct. 3	at Arizona State
Oct. 10	STANFORD
Oct. 24	at USC
Oct. 31	UCLA
Nov. 7	at California
Nov. 14	WASHINGTON
Nov. 21	at Washington State
Dec. 3	at Oregon

2008 Results

	(9-4, 7-2)	
L	at Stanford	28-36
L	at Penn State	14-45
W	HAWAII	45-7
W	USC	27-21
L	at Utah	28-31
W	WASHINGTON STATE	66-13
W	at Washington	34-13
W	ARIZONA STATE	27-25
W	at UCLA	34-6
W	CALIFORNIA	34-21
W	at Arizona	19-17
L	OREGON	38-65
	Sun Bowl	
W	vs. Pittsburgh	3-0

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	30.5	32
Rushing	158.1	49
Passing	249.0	30
Total	407.1	30
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	23.1	47
Rushing	131.2	40
Passing	180.9	22
Total	312.2	23
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 1	+ 0.08	55

ARIZONA WILDCATS

NATIONAL RANK 45

Pac-10 rank: 5 | Record: 8-5 | Pac-10 record: 5-4 (5th) | Stadium: Arizona Stadium (57,400)

Wildcats in A Box

COACH: Mike Stoops — At Arizona and overall: 25-34, 5 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Sonny Dykes
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mark Stoops
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1993, Pac-10 co-champs
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 7 offense, 7 defense, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: TE Rob Gronkowski, TB Nic Grigsby, WR Terrell Turner, WR Delashaun Dean, S Cam Nelson, CB Devin Ross, DE Brooks Reed, LB Sterling Lewis
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Gronkowski will be the cornerstone of an evolving spread attack. Ross and Nelson stabilize a defense that could be among the best in the Pac-10. Reed brings a substantial pass rush.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Either Matt Scott or Nick Foles has to establish himself at quarterback and be effective in the pocket. The loss of both starting offensive tackles, including second-round pick Eben Britton, doesn't bode well. LB Vuna Tuihalamaka and corner-turned-safety Robert Golden need to be playmakers.

OFFENSE

Arizona's original plan was to copy Texas Tech's passing attack. So much for that.

The Wildcats will continue to emerge as more run-based, with the first passing reads going to junior tight end Rob Gronkowski.

It's working. Arizona averaged 36.6 points and 402 yards a year ago.

But nothing much will happen this season if Matt Scott and/or Nick Foles can't take over for quarterback Willie Tuitama, the school record holder for passing touchdowns, passing yards, completions and attempts.

Scott, the backup a year ago, has a reputation for being more a runner. Foles, who sat out after transferring from Michigan State, is a thrower.

Both will look for Gronkowski, a likely early entry into the NFL Draft. He is almost automatic in the red zone, catching 16 touchdown passes in two seasons. Coordinator Sonny Dykes, who imported the spread blueprint from Texas Tech, visited the Dallas Cowboys in the offseason to study how they involve tight end Jason Witten.

Lanky receivers Terrell Turner and Delashaun Dean provide the downfield threats, while Nic Grigsby and Keola Antolin take care of the ground attack. They combined for almost 1,700 yards and 23 touchdowns last season. Neither is big, but they are quick through holes.

DEFENSE

Head coach Mike Stoops has said this could be a great defense. The linebacker trio is touted as being better than advertised, a front line is developing quickly and there is an opportunistic secondary.

Linebackers Xavier Kelley, Vuna Tuihalamaka and Sterling Lewis are not the biggest or broadest, but they are quick and love to hit.

Defensive end Brooks Reed had eight sacks as a first-time defender after switching from H-back. Earl Mitchell is a beast inside with explosiveness off the ball. UA's line depth is easily the best of the Stoops era.

Devin Ross has the speed and instincts to cover the primary threats in the Pac-10, but he needs to make more big plays. Trevin Wade gets a full-time job at corner after picking off four passes in limited action last season. Cam Nelson switched from strong safety to free, with the goal of getting to more balls.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Max Zendejas is an Arizona kicking legend, holding many school records. His nephew, Alex, takes over for Jason Bondzio, who connected on 14 of 16 field goals a year ago. Alex doesn't have the same leg strength as his uncle, but accuracy has become his mainstay during his maturation period.

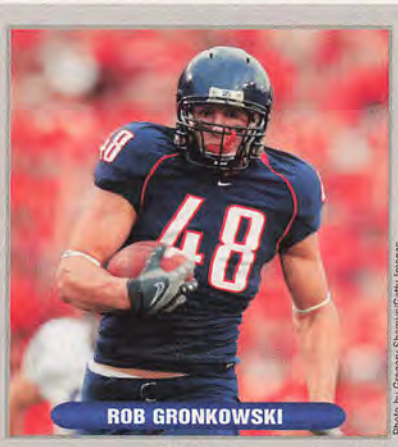
Punter Keenyn Crier has one of the strongest legs in the nation. Crier, the league-leading punter as a freshman in 2007, averaged 43.9 yards per punt with good hang time a year ago.

Mike Thomas, who ended as the Pac-10 leader in career receptions, also leaves a big hole on punt returns. Bug Wright has the quickness and shiftiness to be dangerous; experience is the only problem.

OVERVIEW

Stoops and the program finally cleared a big hurdle last year, capturing a winning season and ending a nine-season bowl drought. Now, which direction do the Cats go after beating BYU in the Las Vegas Bowl?

Arizona's season comes down to the effectiveness of the new quarterback. The rest of the offensive pieces are in place. The defense should be the best in Stoops' five years, with quality depth across the board.



ROB GRONKOWSKI

Photo by Gregory Shamus/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Matt Scott	6-3	190	So.
	Nick Foles	6-5	235	So.
RB	**Nic Grigsby***	**5-10**	**190**	**Jr.**
	Keola Antolin	5-8	186	So.
HB	Chris Gronkowski	6-2	235	Sr.
	Edwin Lopez	5-10	237	Sr.
WR	**Terrell Turner***	**6-2**	**190**	**Sr.**
	Juron Criner	6-4	210	So.
WR	**Delashaun Dean***	**6-4**	**202**	**Jr.**
	Devin Veal	5-11	188	So.
TE	**Rob Gronkowski***	**6-6**	**265**	**Jr.**
	A.J. Simmons	6-3	255	Jr.
LT	**Mike Diaz***	**6-5**	**320**	**Sr.**
	Jack Julsing	6-8	295	Jr.
LG	Conan Amituanai	6-4	335	Jr.
	Mike Diaz	6-5	320	Sr.
C	**Colin Baxter***	**6-4**	**295**	**Jr.**
	Blake Kerley*	**6-2**	**285**	**Sr.**
RG	Vaughn Dotsy	6-5	335	So.
	Jovon Hayes	6-2	300	Jr.
RT	Adam Grant	6-6	325	Sr.
	Trace Biskin	6-5	295	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Brooks Reed***	**6-3**	**255**	**Jr.**
	Apaiata Tuihalamaka	6-3	245	So.
DT	**Earl Mitchell***	**6-2**	**295**	**Sr.**
	Donald Horton	6-0	275	Sr.
NT	**Kaniela Tuipulotu***	**6-2**	**300**	**Jr.**
	Lolomana Mikaele	6-2	305	Jr.
DE	**Ricky Elmore***	**6-5**	**250**	**Jr.**
	D'Aundre Reed	6-4	248	Jr.
LB	Sterling Lewis	5-11	225	Sr.
	C.J. Parish	6-2	235	Jr.
LB	**Xavier Kelley***	**5-11**	**215**	**Sr.**
	Cordarius Golston	6-1	200	Fr.
LB	Vuna Tuihalamaka	6-2	230	Sr.
	R.J. Young	5-11	225	Fr.
CB	**Devin Ross***	**5-11**	**175**	**Sr.**
	Mike Turner	5-11	175	Jr.
CB	Trevin Wade	5-11	182	So.
	Marcus Benjamin	6-0	185	Jr.
SS	Robert Golden	5-11	190	So.
	Joe Perkins	6-2	198	Jr.
FS	**Cam Nelson***	**6-1**	**202**	**Sr.**
	Anthony Wilcox	6-2	205	Sr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Alex Zendejas	5-11	190	So.
P	**Keenyn Crier***	**6-1**	**200**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Sept. 12	NORTHERN ARIZONA
Sept. 19	at Iowa
Sept. 26	at Oregon State
Oct. 10	at Washington
Oct. 17	STANFORD
Oct. 24	UCLA
Nov. 7	WASHINGTON STATE
Nov. 14	at California
Nov. 21	OREGON
Nov. 28	at Arizona State
Dec. 5	at USC

2008 Results

(8-5, 5-4)

W	IDAHO	70-0
W	TOLEDO	41-16
L	at New Mexico	28-36
W	at UCLA	31-10
W	WASHINGTON	48-14
L	at Stanford	23-24
W	CALIFORNIA	42-27
L	USC	10-17
W	at Washington State	59-28
L	at Oregon	45-55
L	OREGON STATE	17-19
W	ARIZONA STATE	31-10
	Las Vegas Bowl	
W	vs. BYU	31-21

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	36.6	16
Rushing	158.4	48
Passing	244.0	36
Total	402.4	33
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	21.3	33
Rushing	131.1	39
Passing	181.9	23
Total	313.0	24
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 6	+ 0.46	29

UCLA BRUINS

NATIONAL RANK 48

Pac-10 rank: 6 | Record: 4-8 | Pac-10 record: 3-6 (8th) | Stadium: Rose Bowl (91,500)

Bruins in A Box

COACH: Rick Neuheisel — At UCLA: 4-8, 1 year; overall: 70-38, 9 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Norm Chow
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Chuck Bullough
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1998
LAST BOWL: 2007, Las Vegas
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 7 offense, 6 defense, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Kevin Prince, RB Christian Ramirez, WR Terrence Austin, DT Brian Price, LB Reggie Carter, LB Akeem Ayers, CB Alterraun Verner, FS Rahim Moore
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: UCLA is strong defensively through the middle with Price, Carter and Moore, and Verner is an elite shut-down corner in the Pac-10. The receiving corps is deep. Tight end should be a position of strength, and Chow likes to use the tight end.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Can the Bruins protect the quarterback and run the ball? They did neither last season, and it turned into the school's worst offensive showing in nearly 40 years. Prince is inexperienced. The Bruins lack a pass-rushing threat.

OFFENSE

Redshirt freshman Kevin Prince is the starting quarterback. How will the five guys in front of him be configured? That's now the biggest question as UCLA enters the season.

Colorado transfer Kai Maiava is the given. He is a center who brings toughness to the unit, but an influx of true freshmen and junior college transfers has the rest of the offensive line unsettled.

Sophomore Jeff Baca, who played left tackle last season, could be the only returning starter on the unit — and he might move to guard.

Prince won the quarterback job in the spring, beating out Kevin Craft, last year's starter. Craft, who threw 20 interceptions, is battling freshman Richard Brehaut to be Prince's backup.

"Prince has a real good handle on what we're doing," said offensive coordinator Norm Chow. "He understands what we're trying to get done. He's very accurate."

The coaching staff determined before spring practice that inexperienced junior running back Christian Ramirez, who was academically ineligible last season, would be the starter at a position where the Bruins appear to have talent and depth.

Sophomore Derrick Coleman (284 yards in '08) is the primary backup, and Johnathan Franklin and Milton Knox are also battling for carries.

Receiver is another area of talent and depth with Terrence Austin (53 catches), Taylor Embree (40) and tight end Ryan Moya (38). However, the lack of a downfield threat on the outside continues to plague the program.

DEFENSE

First-year coordinator Chuck Bullough takes over for DeWayne Walker. While their philosophies are similar and Bullough spent three seasons as Walker's understudy as UCLA's linebackers coach, there are some new wrinkles.

Whether Korey Bosworth and Datone Jones can get enough pressure off the edge is a question, but defensive tackle Brian Price will be a force. Help from the junior college ranks could be coming in training camp. If not, the senior tandem of Jess Ward and Jerzy Siewierski should provide Price with some relief.

The linebackers will be the strength. Kyle Bosworth returns from a knee injury to join Reggie Carter and Akeem Ayers. They are sure tacklers who run to the ball well.

Putting pressure on the quarterback could be vital in preventing breakdowns in the secondary, particularly early in the season as redshirt freshman cornerback Aaron Hester and first-year starting strong safety Glenn Love get acclimated to playing.

The calming influences will be three-year starting corner Alterraun Verner and free safety Rahim Moore, who started 12 games last season as a true freshman.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kai Forbath is a proven commodity. He's hit 44 of 52 field goals in his career, including 6 of 6 beyond 50 yards. Jeff Locke takes over at punter, and his big leg will enable the Bruins to change field position.

Terrence Austin set the single-season kickoff return record (1,109 yards) in '08, but he is yet to break one for a score.

OVERVIEW

UCLA made huge gains in the recruiting battle with USC, but that momentum could falter if the Bruins do not reach a bowl game for a second straight year. The offense should be better because the talent is improving, but the lack of a game-breaker is an issue. Defense will need to carry the Bruins, but inexperience beyond the starters is a red flag.

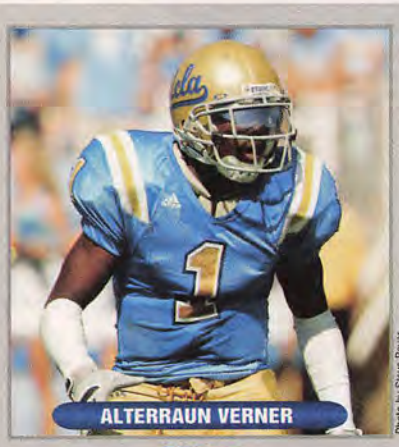

ALTERRAUN VERNER

Photo by Steve Bayer

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Kevin Prince	6-2	226	Fr.
	Kevin Craft	6-4	211	Sr.
RB	Christian Ramirez	6-2	220	Jr.
	Derrick Coleman*	**6-0**	**231**	**So.**
FB	Chane Moline	6-1	244	Sr.
	Trevor Theriot	6-0	241	Sr.
WR	**Taylor Embree***	**6-3**	**194**	**So.**
	Nelson Rosario	6-5	214	So.
WR	**Terrence Austin***	**5-11**	**173**	**Sr.**
	Gavin Ketchum	6-5	210	Sr.
TE	**Logan Paulsen***	**6-6**	**268**	**Sr.**
	Ryan Moya	6-3	247	Sr.
LT	**Jeff Baca***	**6-4**	**305**	**So.**
	Xavier Su'a-Filo	6-4	285	Fr..
LG	Stan Hasiak	6-6	340	Fr.
	Micah Kia*	**6-5**	**320**	**Sr.**
C	Kai Maiava	6-1	322	So.
	Jake Dean	6-4	311	Jr.
RG	Ryan Taylor	6-3	305	Jr.
	Nick Ekbatani*	**6-5**	**308**	**Sr.**
RT	Sean Sheller	6-5	295	Jr.
	Mike Harris	6-5	314	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Datone Jones	6-4	253	So.
	Reggie Stokes*	**6-3**	**259**	**Jr.**
DT	**Brian Price***	**6-2**	**295**	**Jr.**
	Branden Warner	6-2	280	Jr.
DT	Jerzy Siewierski	6-2	297	Sr.
	Jess Ward	6-4	288	Sr.
DE	**Korey Bosworth***	**6-1**	**244**	**Sr.**
	Damien Holmes	63	258	Sr.
LB	Akeem Ayers	6-4	255	So.
	Donovan Carter	6-1	255	Fr.
LB	**Reggie Carter***	**6-1**	**240**	**Sr.**
	Steve Sloan	6-4	235	So.
LB	Kyle Bosworth	6-1	236	Sr.
	Sean Westgate	5-1	210	So.
CB	**Alterraun Verner***	**5-1**	**184**	**Sr.**
	Courtney Viney	5-8	159	So.
CB	Aaron Hester	6-1	200	Fr.
	Courtney Viney	5-8	159	So.
SS	Glenn Love	6-4	212	So.
	Tony Dye	5-11	198	So.
FS	**Rahim Moore***	**6-1**	**188**	**So.**
	Aaron Ware	6-0	206	Sr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Kai Forbath***	**6-0**	**198**	**Jr.**
P	Jeff Locke	6-1	203	Fr.

*** Returning Starters in Bold**

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	SAN DIEGO STATE
Sept. 12	at Tennessee
Sept. 19	KANSAS STATE
Oct. 3	at Stanford
Oct. 10	OREGON
Oct. 17	CALIFORNIA
Oct. 24	at Arizona
Oct. 31	at Oregon State
Nov. 7	WASHINGTON
Nov. 14	at Washington State
Nov. 21	ARIZONA STATE
Nov. 28	at USC

2008 Results

(4-8, 3-6)

W	TENNESSEE (OT)	27-24
L	at BYU	0-59
L	ARIZONA	10-31
L	FRESNO STATE	31-36
W	WASHINGTON STATE	28-3
L	at Oregon	24-31
W	STANFORD	23-20
L	at California	20-41
L	OREGON STATE	6-34
W	at Washington	27-7
L	at Arizona State	9-34
L	USC	7-28

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	17.7	109
Rushing	82.8	116
Passing	200.5	73
Total	283.3	111
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	29.0	85
Rushing	169.8	89
Passing	167.7	8
Total	337.4	47
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 10	- 0.83	104

STANFORD CARDINAL

NATIONAL RANK 55

Pac-10 rank: 7 | Record: 5-7 | Pac-10 record: 4-5 (T-6th) | Stadium: Stanford (50,000)

Cardinal in A Box

COACH: Jim Harbaugh — At Stanford: 9-15, 2 years; overall: 38-21, 5 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: David Shaw
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Ron Lynn and Andy Buh
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1999
LAST BOWL: 2001, Seattle
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 8 offense, 7 defense, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Andrew Luck, RB Toby Gerhart, WR Ryan Whalen, WR Doug Baldwin, DE Tom Keiser, LB Clinton Snyder, S Bo McNally
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Stanford has a blue-collar approach and power running game led by the 237-pound Gerhart and three returning starters on the line. The defense is physical and experienced, with depth on the line and talent at middle linebacker and both safety positions.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Cardinal is far from set at quarterback, where the freshman Luck seems poised to take over for mediocre returning starter Tavita Pritchard. There are no elite receivers. There are major questions at cornerback. And if Gerhart opts for pro baseball, the running game will suffer severely.

OFFENSE

It's difficult to provide an accurate projection of Stanford's offense because of the two great unknowns: The status of tailback Toby Gerhart and the quarterback play.

Let's assume, for a moment, that Gerhart decides against entering the baseball draft and returns to play football.

He would give the Cardinal a punishing runner who gained 1,136 yards, scored 15 touchdowns and was the priority of every defense.

Redshirt freshman quarterback Andrew Luck ended spring ball with a lead on incumbent Tavita Pritchard, a role that likely will be made official in training camp. But is Luck polished and confident enough to win six games, 11 of which come against BCS competition? With Gerhart in the backfield, Luck won't have to win games as much as avoid losing them.

The top pass catchers from '08 return. Doug Baldwin has the speed to make big plays, Ryan Whalen the hands and route-running ability to make tough third-down catches. Sophomore Chris Owusu might be the most gifted of the group.

And then there's Richard Sherman, who made that huge fourth-down catch in the upset of USC but hasn't done much since then except get hurt and land himself in coach Jim Harbaugh's doghouse.

Up front, Stanford must replace two all-league performers — center Alex Fletcher and tackle Ben Muth. To accomplish that, the line has been shuffled. Everyone is either new to the lineup or switching positions. It could take time for the line to become a cohesive unit.

DEFENSE

Stanford ranked in the middle of the Pac-10 in every defensive category last season, except one: It had the No. 9 pass defense in the league, due in part to just seven interceptions.

With questions at three of the four spots, the secondary is the primary concern once again. Former receiver Delano Howell is the projected starter at strong safety alongside veteran Bo McNally. Cornerback is more problematic. In addition to replacing Wopamo Osaisai, the Cardinal needs consistency on the other side.

Stanford possesses one of the top pass rushes in the conference. With Sione Fua, Matt Masifilo and Ekom Udofia, the Cardinal is in fine shape at tackle. Ends Tom Keiser, Erik Lorig and Tom McAndrew combined for 12 sacks and 18 tackles for loss last season.

The linebacking unit has more holes than the line but fewer than the secondary. Clinton Snyder has moved from the edge to the middle. The weak side, where Stanford must replace Pat Maynor (69 tackles), is a concern. If junior Chike Amajoyi can hold down the position, the unit should be solid but not spectacular.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Receiver Doug Baldwin, who will handle punt returns with assistance from Michael Thomas, has the acceleration to break long returns.

Chris Owusu, who has the kind of breakaway speed you rarely see on The Farm, is expected to share kick returning duties with Delano Howell.

The big concern is clearly placekicker, where the Cardinal must replace Aaron Zagory (14 of 17 field goals last season).

OVERVIEW

Stanford seems primed for its first bowl game since 2001 with a veteran team and manageable schedule (seven home games). But to win six games, the Cardinal needs steady play at quarterback and a running game that approximates last year's success behind a reworked line.

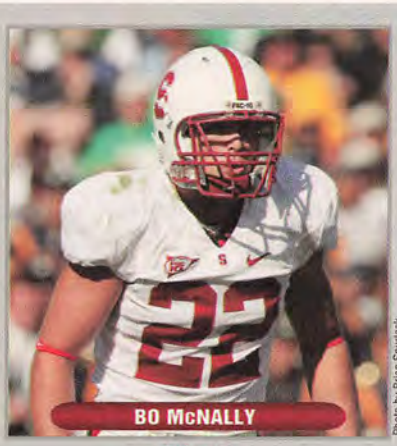

BO McNALLY

Photo by Brian Spurlock

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Andrew Luck	6-4	225	Fr.
	Tavita Pritchard*	**6-4**	**215**	**Sr.**
RB	**Toby Gerhart***	**6-1**	**237**	**Sr.**
	Jeremy Stewart	6-0	218	Jr.
FB	**Owen Marecic***	**6-1**	**241**	**Jr.**
	Josh Catron	6-0	234	Sr.
WR	**Ryan Whalen***	**6-2**	**203**	**Jr.**
	Warren Reuland	6-5	207	So.
WR	**Doug Baldwin***	**5-11**	**189**	**Jr.**
	Chris Owusu	6-2	199	So.
TE	Jim Dray	6-5	253	Sr.
	Coby Fleener	6-6	241	So.
LT	Matt Kopa	6-6	297	Sr.
	Jonathan Martin	6-6	282	Fr.
LG	**Andrew Phillips***	**6-5**	**294**	**Jr.**
	Sam Schwartzstein	6-3	272	Fr.
C	**Chase Beeler***	**6-3**	**276**	**Jr.**
	Bert McBride	6-3	303	Jr.
RG	David DeCastro	6-5	307	Fr.
	Derek Hall	6-5	311	Jr.
RT	**Chris Marinelli***	**6-7**	**298**	**Sr.**
	Tyler Mabry	6-7	287	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Tom Keiser	6-5	253	So.
	Chase Thomas	6-4	228	Fr.
DT	Matt Masifilo	6-3	264	So.
	Brian Bulke	6-4	273	Sr.
DT	**Ekom Udofia***	**6-2**	**322**	**Sr.**
	Sione Fua*	**6-2**	**307**	**Jr.**
DE	**Erik Lorig***	**6-4**	**265**	**Sr.**
	Tom McAndrew	6-5	262	Sr.
LB	Will Powers	6-4	244	Sr.
	Alex Debniak	6-2	220	So.
LB	**Clinton Snyder***	**6-4**	**231**	**Sr.**
	Nick Macaluso	6-3	242	Jr.
LB	Chike Amajoyi	6-0	233	Jr.
	Max Bergen	6-2	227	So.
CB	Corey Gatewood	5-11	191	Jr.
	Mark Mueller	6-3	197	Jr.
CB	Michael Thomas	6-0	188	So.
	Kris Evans*	**6-0**	**191**	**Sr.**
SS	Delano Howell	5-11	195	So.
	Johnson Bademosi	6-1	195	So.
FS	**Bo McNally***	**6-0**	**210**	**Sr.**
	Sean Wiser*	**6-2**	**198**	**So.**

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Travis Golia	6-0	192	So.
P	**David Green***	**6-1**	**191**	**So.**

*** Returning Starters in Bold**

2009 Schedule

Sep. 5	at Washington State
Sep. 12	at Wake Forest
SEP. 19	SAN JOSE STATE
SEP. 26	WASHINGTON
Oct. 3	UCLA
Oct. 10	at Oregon State
Oct. 17	at Arizona
Oct. 24	ARIZONA STATE
Nov. 7	OREGON
Nov. 14	at USC
Nov. 21	CALIFORNIA
Nov. 28	NOTRE DAME

2008 Results

(5-7, 4-5)

W	OREGON STATE	36-28
L	at Arizona State	17-41
L	at TCU	14-31
W	SAN JOSE STATE	23-10
W	at Washington	35-28
L	at Notre Dame	21-28
W	ARIZONA	24-23
L	at UCLA	20-23
W	WASHINGTON STATE	58-0
L	at Oregon	28-35
L	USC	23-45
L	at California	16-37

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	26.3	54
Rushing	199.6	19
Passing	152.2	103
Total	351.8	67
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	27.4	71
Rushing	152.9	77
Passing	226.7	86
Total	379.6	75
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 4	- 0.33	81

ARIZONA STATE SUN DEVILS

NATIONAL RANK 57

Pac-10 rank: 8 | Record: 5-7 | Pac-10 record: 4-5 (T-6th) | Stadium: Sun Devil Stadium (71,706)

Sun Devils in A Box

COACH: Dennis Erickson — At ASU: 15-10, 2 years; overall: 163-75-1, 20 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Rich Olson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Craig Bray
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1996
LAST BOWL: 2007, Holiday
RETURNING STARTERS: 15, 7 offense, 6 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: WR Chris McGaha, LT Shawn Lauvao, WR Kyle Williams, DE Dexter Davis, DT Lawrence Guy, LB Mike Nixon, CB Omar Bolden, K Thomas Weber
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The defense has experience and the kind of speed Erickson has relied on for decades. The front four is a viable threat rushing the passer on every down, and is also physical enough to stop the run. The top receivers bring stability to the offense.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: QB Danny Sullivan has yet to prove he can get the job done in crunch time. The rushing attack ranked 113th nationally, and there is still not a true go-to tailback. The safeties are quick, but lack experience.

OFFENSE

Quarterback Rudy Carpenter started 43 consecutive games — hardly anyone else took a meaningful snap over the past three-plus seasons. Now it's Danny Sullivan's turn.

The senior has sat and waited. He says he is ready, but he completed just 15 of 43 passes a year ago as the backup and has to prove he can get the job done once the games begin.

Samson Szakacsy — a mobile, on-the-run thrower — and freshman Brock Osweiler will challenge Sullivan.

Whoever winds up under center could use some help staying upright. ASU's 34 sacks allowed in 2008 was a huge improvement on the 55 allowed in 2007, but was still too many.

The line has been reworked with taller, more physical players. Tackle Shawn Lauvao could play on most anybody's line. Garth Gerhart won the starting center spot in the spring. His mobility and understanding of the offense has him in control.

Partly because of poor line play, the running game ranked 113th nationally last year, averaging 89 yards per game. Dimitri Nance is a powerful runner and sophomore Ryan Bass can add some needed flash with his quickness and change-of-speed ability at the line of scrimmage.

Receivers Chris McGaha, Kerry Taylor and Kyle Williams make up a trio of sure hands, speed and explosiveness.

DEFENSE

Arizona State, noted for its offense over the years, is changing gears. It's about to get after it on defense.

Two of the top front-line players in the Pac-10 are back. End Dexter Davis is a pass-rushing specialist and is the only player in the country to have posted back-to-back double-digit sack seasons. Sophomore tackle Lawrence Guy went from being an end to a force in the middle, making 44 tackles, including 10 for losses.

James Brooks, replacing Luis Vasquez, is an up-and-coming sophomore end who should take advantage of all the blocking attention paid to Davis.

ASU goes eight or nine deep at the linebacker position. Mike Nixon, a 25-year-old former minor-league baseball player, serves as the catalyst. He had five interceptions last season.

Cornerback Omar Bolden is not afraid of confrontation and is physical enough to win most of the battles. Terell Carr has 4.4-speed at the other corner.

Ryan McFoy is considered a ball magnet at strong safety, while Clint Floyd gets the nod at free safety. The two are quick, and show all the signs of being able to get the job done.

SPECIAL TEAMS

It's a one-man kicking show. Thomas Weber, the 2007 Lou Groza Award winner, is one of the best kickers in the game, but he also expanded his role.

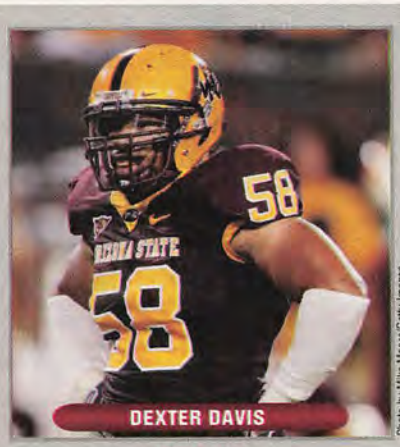
Weber has connected on 43 of 50 field goal tries. He is also called upon to punt, averaging 41.4 yards last season.

Pac-10 leading punt returner Kyle Williams is a highlight reel waiting to happen. His 17-yard average is one reason why punters stay away from him. He also averages 23.3 yards per kick return.

OVERVIEW

The Sun Devils are positioning themselves to have a defense as good as most in the Pac-10, but that won't matter if a quarterback can't sustain some type of threat. ASU heads into the season lacking playmakers at quarterback, tailback and tight end.

Good defense, questionable offense. Does that add up to a winning season?



DEXTER DAVIS

Photo by Mike Moore/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Danny Sullivan	6-4	242	Sr.
	Samson Szakacsy	6-4	205	So.
RB	**Dimitri Nance***	**5-10**	**218**	**Sr.**
	Shaun DeWitty	6-2	210	Sr.
WR	**Kerry Taylor***	**6-0**	**197**	**Jr.**
	Gerell Robinson	6-4	230	So.
WR	Kyle Williams	5-10	186	Sr.
	A.J. Pickens	5-10	172	Fr.
WR	**Chris McGaha***	**6-1**	**199**	**Sr.**
	T.J. Simpson	6-1	189	So.
TE	Dan Knapp	6-5	258	So.
	Jovon Williams	6-4	225	Sr.
LT	**Shawn Lauvao***	**6-3**	**305**	**Sr.**
	Kyle Johnson	6-7	292	Fr.
LG	**Jon Hargis***	**6-3**	**312**	**Jr.**
	Adam Tello	6-3	290	So.
C	**Garth Gerhart***	**6-1**	**302**	**So.**
	Thomas Altieri*	**6-1**	**301**	**Sr.**
RG	Zach Schlink	6-4	331	So.
	Adam Tello	6-3	290	So.
RT	Tom Njunge	6-5	272	Sr.
	Matt Hustad	6-5	292	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	James Brooks	6-5	278	So.
	Jamaar Jarrett	6-5	268	So.
DT	**Lawrence Guy***	**6-5**	**293**	**So.**
	Jonathan English	6-0	282	Jr.
DT	Saia Falahola	6-1	298	Jr.
	David Bertrand	6-1	265	Sr.
DE	**Dexter Davis***	**6-2**	**255**	**Sr.**
	Dean DeLeone	6-2	245	Jr.
LB	Shelly Lyons	6-2	225	So.
	Colin Parker	6-1	228	So.
LB	**Travis Goethel***	**6-3**	**237**	**Sr.**
	Derrall Anderson	6-2	231	So.
LB	**Mike Nixon***	**6-3**	**224**	**Sr.**
	Vontaze Burfict	6-3	245	Fr.
CB	**Omar Bolden***	**5-10**	**195**	**Jr.**
	Pierre Singfield	5-11	196	Sr.
CB	**Terell Carr***	**5-9**	**177**	**Sr.**
	Josh Jordan	6-1	173	So.
SS	Ryan McFoy	6-1	209	Sr.
	Max Tabach	6-2	205	Jr.
FS	Clint Floyd	5-10	198	So.
	Jarrell Holman	6-0	200	Sr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Thomas Weber***	**6-1**	**207**	**Jr.**
P	**Thomas Weber***	**6-1**	**207**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	IDAHO STATE
Sept. 19	LOUISIANA-MONROE
Sept. 26	at Georgia
Oct. 3	OREGON STATE
Oct. 10	at Washington State
Oct. 17	WASHINGTON
Oct. 24	at Stanford
Oct. 31	CALIFORNIA
Nov. 7	USC
Nov. 14	at Oregon
Nov. 21	at UCLA
Nov. 28	ARIZONA

2008 Results

	(5-7, 4-5)	
W	NORTHERN ARIZONA	30-13
W	STANFORD	41-17
L	UNLV (OT)	20-23
L	GEORGIA	10-27
L	at California	14-24
L	at USC	0-28
L	OREGON	20-54
L	at Oregon State	25-27
W	at Washington	39-19
W	WASHINGTON STATE	31-0
W	UCLA	34-9
L	at Arizona	10-31

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	22.8	84
Rushing	89.1	113
Passing	220.3	54
Total	309.4	100
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	22.7	45
Rushing	126.5	35
Passing	208.7	59
Total	335.2	44
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 5	+ 0.42	33

WASHINGTON HUSKIES

NATIONAL RANK 79

Pac-10 rank: 9 | Record: 0-12 | Pac-10 record: 0-9 (10th) | Stadium: Husky Stadium (72,500)

Huskies in A Box

COACH: Steve Sarkisian — At Washington and overall: 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Doug Nussmeier
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Nick Holt
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2000
LAST BOWL: 2002, Sun
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 7 offense, 9 defense
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Jake Locker, WR D'Andre Goodwin, DE Daniel Te'o-Nesheim, LB E.J. Savannah
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: A new attitude might be the biggest positive. Locker and Te'o-Nesheim have undeniable talent. The Huskies have a lot of young skill players who are beginning to mature.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: This team wasn't as bad as it looked a year ago, but there are still problems greater than coaching. The offensive line and secondary each remain big concerns, despite the return of experienced players. The Huskies open at home against LSU, which means the losing streak likely will reach 15, at least.

OFFENSE

New coach Steve Sarkisian mostly will use the same pro-style attack he headed up at USC, although the offense is worth tweaking to take advantage of the prodigious running talents of junior quarterback Jake Locker.

That likely means keeping some elements of the spread attack implemented during the Tyrone Willingham regime. Locker — healthy after missing the final eight games of last season because of a broken thumb — might be helped by not having to do everything in the offense.

But questions remain as to exactly who will be providing that help.

Junior receiver D'Andre Goodwin is the best place to start. He made 60 catches last season and is one of the team's fastest players. The new offense could be tailor-made for his skills.

Tight end Kavario Middleton, the top recruit in the Class of 2008, needs vast improvement as a blocker and with consistency, but he is likely to take on a much bigger role as a pass-catcher.

The tailback spot is completely uncertain. Five players shared time in the spring, though the most likely starter could be Chris Polk, who started the first two games last season before suffering a shoulder injury. Freshman Demitrius Bronson is the biggest of UW's backs and is likely to get major use in short-yardage situations.

The line has three returning starters, the best of whom might be junior Ryan Tolar, who spent the spring alternating at guard and center.

DEFENSE

Sarkisian's most heralded move was luring defensive coordinator Nick Holt away from USC. Sarkisian did so by offering a guaranteed three-year deal that could be worth $2.1 million, and he also promised Holt total control of the defense.

At USC, Holt ceded play-calling duties to head coach Pete Carroll.

Holt will be entrusted with remaking a defense that gave up a school-record 451.8 yards per game. As for the scheme, Holt says it will be similar to what he helped orchestrate at USC, meaning a 4-3 base.

Hope for immediate improvement lies in the return of nine starters, including a couple of potential all-conference candidates in end Daniel Te'o-Nesheim and outside linebacker Mason Foster.

Te'o-Nesheim had eight sacks last season, half of the team total.

All three starters return at linebacker, bolstered by the return of E.J. Savannah, the team's leading tackler in 2007 who was not with the team last season. Linebacker might be the strongest unit on the team.

SPECIAL TEAMS

UW had the lowest net punting average in the conference last season at 31.7 yards, and the Huskies hit just 9 of 17 field goals, also worst in the conference.

Sarkisian will break in two new kickers — sophomore placekicker Erik Folk, the brother of the Dallas Cowboys' Nick Folk, and junior college punter Will Mahan. Folk has missed most of the past two years with injuries.

OVERVIEW

It's a complete restart, with Sarkisian not retaining anybody from the old staff. With most of the key players returning from a year ago, though, there is finally a fair amount of experience as the Huskies attempt to overcome a winless season.

If Locker stays upright and grasps the system quickly, the offense could improve. The defense can only get better. The Huskies will win a few, but not much more.

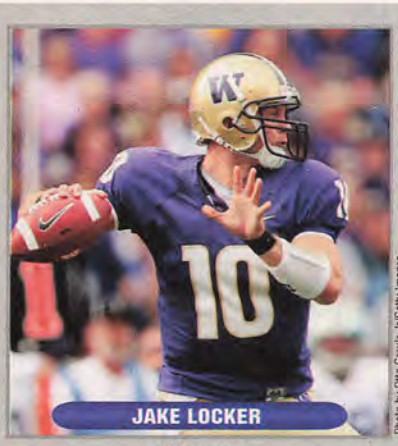

JAKE LOCKER

Photo by Otto Greule Jr/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Jake Locker	6-3	222	Jr.
	Ronnie Fouch*	**6-1**	**203**	**So.**
RB	Chris Polk	5-11	200	Fr.
	Willie Griffin*	**5-8**	**198**	**So.**
FB	**Paul Homer***	**6-1**	**239**	**Sr.**
	Austin Sylvester	6-1	245	So.
WR	**D'Andre Goodwin***	**5-11**	**175**	**Jr.**
	Cody Bruns	5-11	168	So.
WR	Jermaine Kearse	6-1	180	So.
	Devin Aguilar	6-0	195	So.
TE	Kavario Middleton	6-5	255	So.
	Chris Izbicki	6-3	249	So.
LT	**Cody Habben***	**6-6**	**316**	**Jr.**
	Nick Scott	6-4	337	Sr.
LG	**Ben Ossai***	**6-6**	**332**	**Sr.**
	Morgan Rosborough	6-6	382	Sr.
C	**Ryan Tolar***	**6-5**	**321**	**Jr.**
	Mykenna Ikehara	6-3	291	Fr.
RG	Senio Kelemete	6-4	260	So.
	Scott Shugert	6-5	324	So.
RT	Drew Schaefer	6-5	275	Fr.
	Mark Armelin	6-5	304	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Daniel Te'o-Nesheim***	**6-4**	**263**	**Sr.**
	Everrette Thompson	6-6	255	So.
DT	**Alameda Ta'amu***	**6-2**	**348**	**So.**
	Tyrone Duncan	6-2	278	So.
DT	Cameron Elisara	6-3	289	Jr.
	Craig Noble	6-3	300	Fr.
DE	**Darrion Jones***	**6-2**	**245**	**Sr.**
	Kalani Aldrich	6-7	240	So.
LB	E.J. Savannah	6-1	230	Sr.
	Cort Dennison	6-1	230	So.
LB	**Donald Butler***	**6-1**	**242**	**Sr.**
	Trenton Tuiasosopo*	**6-2**	**243**	**Sr.**
LB	**Mason Foster***	**6-1**	**229**	**Jr.**
	Matt Houston	6-0	232	Jr.
CB	Justin Glenn	5-11	185	Fr.
	Matt Mosley	5-10	180	Jr.
CB	**Quinton Richardson***	**6-0**	**200**	**So.**
	Vonzell McDowell Jr.	5-9	178	Jr.
SS	**Nate Williams***	**6-0**	**207**	**Jr.**
	Victor Aiywea	6-1	209	Jr.
FS	Johri Fogerson	6-2	190	So.
	Greg Walker	5-11	198	Fr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Erik Folk	5-11	199	So.
P	Will Mahan	5-11	200	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	LSU
Sept. 12	IDAHO
Sept. 19	USC
Sept. 26	at Stanford
Oct. 3	at Notre Dame
Oct. 10	ARIZONA
Oct. 17	at Arizona State
Oct. 24	OREGON
Nov. 7	at UCLA
Nov. 14	at Oregon State
Nov. 28	WASHINGTON STATE
Dec. 5	CALIFORNIA

2008 Results

(0-12, 0-9)

L	at Oregon	10-44
L	BRIGHAM YOUNG	27-28
L	OKLAHOMA	14-55
L	STANFORD	28-35
L	at Arizona	14-48
L	OREGON STATE	13-34
L	NOTRE DAME	7-33
L	at USC	0-56
L	ARIZONA STATE	19-39
L	UCLA	7-27
L	at Washington State (2 OT)	13-16
L	at California	7-48

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	13.3	117
Rushing	99.3	106
Passing	163.8	101
Total	263.2	116
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	38.6	116
Rushing	240.6	117
Passing	211.2	62
Total	451.8	110
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 17	- 1.42	116

WASHINGTON ST. COUGARS

NATIONAL RANK 90

Pac-10 rank: 10 | Record: 2-11 | Pac-10 record: 1-8 (9th) | Stadium: Martin Stadium (35,117)

Cougars in A Box

COACH: Paul Wulff — At WSU: 2-11, 1 year; overall: 55-51, 9 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Todd Sturdy
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Chris Ball, Jody Sears
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2002, co-champs
LAST BOWL: 2003, Holiday
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 8 offense, 5 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: OL Kenny Alfred, S Xavier Hicks, LB Andy Mattingly, RB James Montgomery, WR Jeshua Anderson, LB Louis Bland
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: It's all relative, but the Cougars were well-stocked at running back and got deeper with the addition of Montgomery, a transfer from Cal. That should go hand-in-hand with improvement on the offensive line. The kickers look to be as capable as most in the Pac-10.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: How long do you have? Next-to-last nationally in offense, the Cougars might start only two seniors — and that may be the strong side of the ball. Defensively, WSU has no proven stoppers in the front four, had all three potential starting linebackers hurt in the spring and remains extremely thin at cornerback.

OFFENSE

The notion that the Cougars might be able to put together a running game keeps hopes afloat after last year's 2-11 disaster.

Running back is the best-stocked position on the team, with five experienced backs returning and the addition of Cal transfer James Montgomery. He'll challenge Dwight Tardy, a fourth-year starter who struggled through his worst season — 481 yards — with the lingering effects of a 2007 knee injury.

Coach Paul Wulff preached and pushed for a more physical presence up front in the offseason, and found a disciple in Zack Williams, a junior college transfer who redshirted a year ago. Center Kenny Alfred and tackle Micah Hannam will provide the veteran leadership.

And the quarterback will be … well, stay tuned.

Kevin Lopina, who came back from what amounted to a broken neck to finish 2008 as the starter, is willing. Sophomore Marshall Lobbestael, if he's fully recovered from knee surgery, is the better thrower. Though for a team that surrendered 43 sacks, both had better be mobile.

It has been a spell since the Cougars have headed into the season without an established receiver. Speedy Jeshua Anderson has the best resume, but splitting time with track has slowed his progress. An intriguing newcomer is Johnny Forzani, a Canadian whose football experience is limited to reps with the Calgary Stampeders practice squad.

DEFENSE

Two years ago, Andy Mattingly was a blossoming star at linebacker. But he was moved to defensive end when Wulff took over and all but disappeared.

Now he's back at his most comfortable position, and the Cougs will need the 91 tackles he produced as a sophomore, since middle linebacker Alex Hoffman-Ellis is a newbie. On the other side, Louis Bland could eventually develop into a game changer.

Worst in the nation against the run in 2008, the Cougars still don't know if they have a capable defensive tackle. They thought it might be junior college redshirt Bernard Wolfgramm, but back surgery kept him out of spring ball.

If anything, the Cougs are thinner at defensive end, where Kevin Kooyman's development has been stalled by injuries.

Strong safety Xavier Hicks has turned around a troubled stay at WSU and is now the defensive leader, with an improving Chima Nwachukwu at the other safety spot. But the cornerback situation is pretty dire if Romeo Pellum doesn't return from a spring suspension.

SPECIAL TEAMS

After several years of ineptitude, the Cougs found a kicker last fall in junior college transfer Nico Grasu, who came up with three clutch field goals to beat Washington.

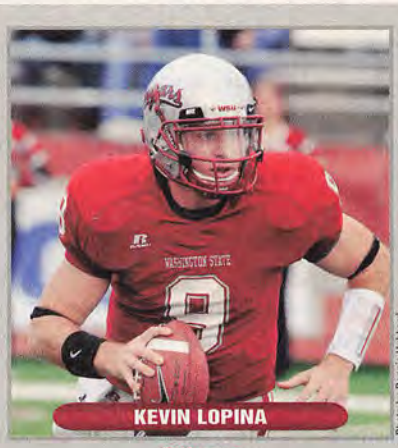
Likewise, Reid Forrest — mostly a rollout punter when he took over the job in 2007 — worked hard to develop his leg and established himself as dependable Pac-10 player with a 41.2-yard average.

OVERVIEW

Cougar fans might get an even better idea of the depth of the rebuilding job Wulff inherited a year ago, hardly the antidote to his 2-11 first season.

The small ray of hope is the hint of a running game — several capable backs and a developing line — that might make some progress controlling the ball and keeping an inexperienced, undersized and marginally gifted defense off the field.

Only a winless Washington team kept the Cougars out of the Pac-10 cellar in 2008, but they may not even have that buffer this time around.



KEVIN LOPINA

Photo by Dennis Hubbard

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Marshall Lobbestael	6-3	199	So.
	Kevin Lopina*	**6-3**	**228**	**Sr.**
RB	**Dwight Tardy***	**5-10**	**210**	**Sr.**
	James Montgomery	5-10	192	Jr.
WR	**Jeshua Anderson***	**6-2**	**186**	**Jr.**
	Daniel Blackledge	6-1	178	Jr.
WR	**Kevin Norrell***	**5-9**	**191**	**So.**
	Johnny Forzani	6-1	202	Jr.
WR	Jared Karstetter	6-4	198	So.
	Jeffrey Solomon	6-0	195	Jr.
TE	Tony Thompson	6-2	241	Sr.
	Skylar Stormo	6-4	253	Fr.
LT	Steven Ayers	6-4	311	So.
	Joe Eppele	6-8	294	Jr.
LG	Zack Williams	6-4	293	Jr.
	Mike Bruce	6-4	304	So.
C	**Kenny Alfred***	**6-2**	**293**	**Sr.**
	Andrew Roxas*	**6-1**	**295**	**Jr.**
RG	**B.J. Guerra***	**6-3**	**293**	**So.**
	Brian Danaher	6-3	287	Jr.
RT	**Micah Hannam***	**6-4**	**284**	**Jr.**
	Reed Lesuma	6-4	302	Sr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Kevin Kooyman	6-6	247	Sr.
	Jesse Feagin	6-2	266	Sr.
DT	**Toby Turpin***	**6-4**	**276**	**Jr.**
	Dan Spitz	6-7	260	Fr.
DT	Bernard Wolfgramm	6-3	288	Jr.
	Josh Luapo	6-0	295	Jr.
DE	Cory Mackay	6-4	246	Fr.
	Casey Hamlett	6-3	245	Jr.
LB	Andy Mattingly	6-4	241	Sr.
	Hallston Higgins	5-11	211	Jr.
LB	Alex Hoffman-Ellis	6-1	220	So.
	Jason Stripling	5-11	214	Sr.
LB	**Louis Bland***	**5-10**	**203**	**So.**
	Myron Beck	5-11	202	Jr.
CB	Devin Giles	6-0	169	Sr.
	Brandon Jones	5-9	177	Jr.
CB	Tyrone Justin	5-11	157	So.
	Shane Thomas	5-10	186	So.
SS	**Xavier Hicks***	**6-0**	**196**	**Sr.**
	Tyree Toomer*	**5-11**	**188**	**So.**
FS	**Chima Nwachukwu***	**5-11**	**197**	**Jr.**
	Eric Block	6-0	187	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Nico Grasu***	**6-0**	**225**	**Jr.**
P	**Reid Forrest***	**6-2**	**183**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	STANFORD
Sept. 12	vs. Hawaii (Seattle)
Sept. 19	SMU
Sept. 26	at USC
Oct. 3	at Oregon
Oct. 10	ARIZONA STATE
Oct. 24	at California
Oct. 31	vs. Notre Dame (San Antonio, TX)
Nov. 7	at Arizona
Nov. 14	UCLA
Nov. 21	OREGON STATE
Nov. 28	at Washington

2008 Results

	(2-11, 1-8)	
L	OKLAHOMA STATE	13-39
L	CALIFORNIA	3-66
L	at Baylor	17-45
W	PORTLAND STATE	48-9
L	OREGON	14-63
L	at UCLA	3-28
L	at Oregon State	13-66
L	USC	0-69
L	at Stanford	0-58
L	ARIZONA	28-59
L	at Arizona State	0-31
W	WASHINGTON (2 OT)	16-13
L	at Hawaii	10-24

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	12.7	118
Rushing	95.1	110
Passing	146.0	106
Total	241.1	118
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	43.9	118
Rushing	247.6	119
Passing	195.8	44
Total	443.4	108
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 25	- 1.92	119

Conference Title Up for Grabs

The Big East finds itself without a clear-cut favorite this year. Whether that's a good thing or a bad one for the conference depends on your vantage point.

Nationally, the perception most likely will be that the Big East is down.

You can already hear the grousing from the Mountain West about being a more deserving candidate for an automatic BCS bid.

But within the confines of the league, it means hope. And opportunity — the kind that allowed upstart Cincinnati to win the Big East title and earn the accompanying Orange Bowl bid a year ago.

"Every sport in every conference is cyclical," said Nick Carparelli Jr., the Big East's associate commissioner for football.

"I think we've always said that one of the strengths of our conference is how competitive we are from top to bottom, and I think that will be illustrated this year more than any other year. We're going into this year without a consensus favorite."

The problem is that even before the season begins, the Big East heads into the season seriously lacking in Top 25 teams.

For now, West Virginia — minus Pat White under center for the first time since 2004 — appears to have the most Top 25 potential because of dazzling running back Noel Devine and a proven quarterback in Jarrett Brown, who has looked good as an injury replacement. *Lindy's*, for one, has the Mountaineers at No. 20 — with no other team within shouting distance of the Top 25.

Cincinnati will try to defend its title with the league's best quarterback-wide receiver combination (Tony Pike and Mardy Gilyard), but also with a rebuilt defense that lost 10 starters and is switching to a 3-4 under new coordinator Bobby Diaco.

That puts them in the mix as league contenders.

"Top to bottom, the league is going to be as competitive as ever," said Rutgers coach Greg Schiano.

Schiano's Knights are one of the teams looking to break through the way Cincinnati did last season. Though a charter member of the Big East, Rutgers has never won the league title, finishing tied for second in two of the past three seasons.

But Schiano needs to replace the most accomplished quarterback in school history (Mike Teel) and record-setting wide receiver Kenny Britt.

If he can fill those voids, the rest of the pieces appear to be in place: Rutgers could have the league's best defense, also returning its offensive line intact and all of its running backs. The Knights also

BIG EAST Picks

	GOOD NEWS	BAD NEWS	OUR CALL
1. West Virginia	Explosive RB Noel Devine heads an offense brimming with potential.	Four tough road games and Pat White's departure.	Rising up the Top 25 is possible if WVU survives Auburn and Colorado early.
2. Rutgers	The defense can be dominant and the offensive line returns intact.	Ongoing uncertainty at quarterback and wide receiver.	If a quarterback is found, the Knights will contend for the Big East title.
3. Cincinnati	QB Tony Pike and WR Mardy Gilyard are the league's best.	The defense is switching to a 3-4 — with (count 'em) 10 new starters.	Bearcats will take a step back, especially with this schedule.
4. Pittsburgh	Dave Wannstedt just keeps stockpiling good, young talent.	RB LeSean McCoy and LB Scott McKillop left huge voids to fill.	The season hinges on quarterback Bill Stull and finding a running back.
5. South Florida	Plenty of star power with QB Matt Grothe and DE George Selvie.	Running game is inconsistent and the offensive line requires a rebuild.	The Bulls, still looking for a season-long breakthrough, appear to be over-scheduled.
6. Connecticutt	New coordinator Joe Moorhead vows to spice up a vanilla offense.	The schedule is beefed up and star RB Donald Brown is gone.	The rebuilding Huskies have the look of a .500 team — at best.
7. Louisville	Victor Anderson and Doug Beaumont give the offense promise.	The QB situation is a mess and the coach may be on the way out.	Cards have fallen on hard times and there's little relief in sight.
8. Syracuse	New coach Doug Marrone brings a fresh outlook and high energy.	There's still an alarming shortage of talent throughout the roster.	The Orange can escape the Big East cellar only if everything goes right.

Lindy's 2009 ALL-BIG EAST Team

OFFENSE - First Team

QB	Tony Pike	Sr.	Cincinnati
RB	Noel Devine	Jr.	West Virginia
RB	Victor Anderson	So.	Louisville
WR	Mardy Gilyard	Sr.	Cincinnati
WR	Jessie Hester	Sr.	South Florida
TE	Nate Byham	Sr.	Pittsburgh
C	Ryan Blaszczyk	Sr.	Rutgers
OL	Moe Petrus	So.	Connecticut
OL	Jason Pinkston	Jr.	Pittsburgh
OL	Jeff Linkenbach	Sr.	Cincinnati
OL	Anthony Davis	Jr.	Rutgers
AP	Mardy Gilyard	Sr.	Cincinnati
PK	Jake Rogers	Jr.	Cincinnati

DEFENSE - First Team

DL	Arthur Jones	Sr.	Syracuse
DL	Greg Romeus	Jr.	Pittsburgh
DL	Scooter Berry	Jr.	West Virginia
DL	George Selvie	Sr.	South Florida
LB	Ryan D'Imperio	Sr.	Rutgers
LB	Scott Lutrus	Jr.	Connecticut
LB	Reed Williams	Sr.	West Virginia
DB	Johnny Patrick	Jr.	Louisville
DB	Aaron Berry	Sr.	Pittsburgh
DB	Nate Allen	Sr.	South Florida
DB	Brandon Hogan	Jr.	West Virginia
P	Rob Long	Jr.	Syracuse

OFFENSE - Second Team

QB	Matt Grothe	Sr.	South Florida
RB	Delone Carter	Jr.	Syracuse
RB	John Goebel	Jr.	Cincinnati
WR	Jonathan Baldwin	So.	Pittsburgh
WR	Tim Brown	Sr.	Rutgers
TE	Shamar Graves	Jr.	Rutgers
C	Jason Kelce	Jr.	Cincinnati
OL	Zach Hermann	Jr.	South Florida
OL	Selvish Capers	Sr.	West Virginia
OL	Mike Hicks	Sr.	Connecticut
OL	Lucas Nix	So.	Pittsburgh
AP	Max Suter	Jr.	Syracuse
PK	San San Te	So.	Rutgers

DEFENSE - Second Team

DL	Chris Neild	Jr.	West Virginia
DL	Mick Williams	Sr.	Pittsburgh
DL	George Johnson	Sr.	Rutgers
DL	Aaron Harris	Sr.	South Florida
LB	J.T. Thomas	Jr.	West Virginia
LB	Greg Williams	So.	Pittsburgh
LB	Jon Dempsey	Sr.	Louisville
DB	Devin McCourty	Jr.	Rutgers
DB	Dom DeCicco	Jr.	Pittsburgh
DB	Robert Vaughn	Sr.	Connecticut
DB	Mike Holmes	Jr.	Syracuse
P	Teddy Dellaganna	Jr.	Rutgers

have two promising kicking specialists.

The Knights, who rebounded from a 1-5 start in 2008 by winning their final seven games, also get Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, West Virginia and South Florida at home this year.

"We have a chance," Schiano said. "But a lot of teams are saying the same thing."

South Florida and Pittsburgh are among them.

The Bulls have two of the league's brightest stars in quarterback Matt Grothe and defensive end George Selvie, but need to rebuild their offensive line. USF — which faces Miami and Florida State in non-conference play — has never finished better than 4-3 in league play despite its quick rise to national prominence.

Pittsburgh has sleeper potential despite losing star running back LeSean McCoy because of coach Dave Wannstedt's continued success on the recruiting trail. But the Panthers need better play from erratic quarterback Bill Stull and need to find a workhorse back.

Connecticut lost 2,000-yard rusher Donald Brown — the second straight season the Big East has produced a 2,000-yard rusher — but new offensive coordinator Joe Moorhead arrived to shake up a unit that had become too predictable. The Huskies have beefed up their non-conference schedule as well, with Baylor, Notre Dame and North Carolina on the docket.

Louisville and Syracuse find themselves at completely different crossroads — but both are still bringing up the bottom of the league.

Steve Kragthorpe's job as Cardinals coach could be in jeopardy if Louisville doesn't reverse its recent fortunes. With no experienced quarterback to call upon, that figures to be a daunting challenge.

Syracuse ushers in the Doug Marrone era, having hired one of its own to replace Greg Robinson. The Orange will benefit from the return of wide receiver Mike Williams and running back Delone Carter to full-time availability once again. Williams missed last season while Carter played in just five games recovering from a hip injury that sidelined him all of 2007.

— Tom Luicci

Most Valuable Player

Noel Devine
West Virginia

Offensive Player of the Year

Tony Pike
Cincinnati

Defensive Player of the Year

George Selvie
South Florida

Newcomer of the Year

Dion Lewis
Pittsburgh

HONOR ROLL

Most accurate passer	Tony Pike	Cincinnati
Strongest arm	Tony Pike	Cincinnati
Best scrambler	Matt Grothe	South Florida
Coolest in the clutch	Jarrett Brown, QB	West Virginia
Toughest to bring down	Noel Devine, RB	West Virginia
Best hands	Jonathan Baldwin, WR	Pittsburgh
Most dangerous deep threat	Tim Brown, WR	Rutgers
Best pass blocker	Anthony Davis, OT	Rutgers
Best run blocker	Jason Pinkston, OT	Pittsburgh
Best cover corner	Johnny Patrick	Louisville
Best pass rusher	George Selvie, DE	South Florida
Special teams demon	Devin McCourty	Rutgers

The Big Ones

Sept. 5	
Minnesota at Syracuse	New Orange coach Doug Marrone gets an immediate test.
Sept. 7	
Cincinnati at Rutgers	An early league contender should emerge from this one.
Sept. 12	
North Carolina at Connecticut	Huskies would have a better shot if this was hoops.
Syracuse at Penn State	Two Big Ten foes already? Who made SU's schedule?
Sept. 19	
West Virginia at Auburn	A chance for WVU to show it is Top 25 worthy.
Cincinnati at Oregon State	Bearcats gained prominence by routing Beavers in '07.
Connecticut at Baylor	Bears' QB Robert Griffin will be a handful for Huskies.
Louisville at Kentucky	Even in a down year for both, this game means a lot.
Sept. 26	
Louisville at Utah	A loss here puts Steve Kragthorpe squarely on the hot seat.
Fresno State at Cincinnati	Bulldogs eye a second Big East road win in three years.
Rutgers at Maryland	Scarlet Knights' first — and only — non-conference test.
South Florida at Florida State	Big East and USF need Matt Grothe to work his magic.
Pittsburgh at NC State	Improved Wolfpack will be a good barometer for Panthers.
Oct. 1	
Colorado at West Virginia	Mountaineers seek revenge for last year's loss at Boulder.
Oct. 15	
Cincinnati at South Florida	Sorting-out process for league contenders begins here.
Oct. 16	
Pittsburgh at Rutgers	Panthers still stinging from last year's 54-34 home loss.
Oct. 30	
West Virginia at South Florida	Three of WVU's final five are Big East road games.
Nov. 13	
West Virginia at Cincinnati	Last year's meeting — won by Cincy — decided the league.
Nov. 14	
Notre Dame at Pittsburgh	Panthers' OT win at Notre Dame last year was a classic.
Nov. 21	
Connecticut at Notre Dame	Huskies' bowl hopes could by on life support by this one.
Nov. 27	
Pittsburgh at West Virginia	The Backyard Brawl could have league title implications.
Illinois at Cincinnati	Tony Pike vs. Juice Williams is worth the admission price.
Nov. 28	
Miami at South Florida	The first of five straight meetings between the schools.
Dec. 5	
West Virginia at Rutgers	Knights have lost 14 straight times to the Mountaineers.
Cincinnati at Pittsburgh	If WVU stumbles, this one could decide the league title.

NOEL DEVINE

Photo by Joe Robbins

Bowl Connections

Champion
BCS title game if ranked #1 or 2, otherwise Orange, Fiesta, Rose or Sugar

Big East #2
Gator Bowl vs. ACC #2 or #3

Big East #3
Meineke Bowl vs. ACC #6

Big East #4-7
Papajohns.com Bowl vs. SEC

Big East #4-7
International Bowl vs. MAC #1, 2 or 3

Big East #4-7
St. Petersburg Bowl vs. C-USA #5

Top 10 NFL Talent

1.	George Selvie	DE	Sr.	South Florida	Double teams have limited him, but he projects as Top 15 pick.
2.	Anthony Davis	OT	Jr.	Rutgers	Fits the NFL prototype (6-6, 325) — with atypical athleticism.
3.	Jonathan Baldwin	WR	So.	Pittsburgh	Tall, rangy WR just scratching surface as Pitt's latest good one.
4.	Arthur Jones	DT	Sr.	Syracuse	Dominant lineman has produced despite little supporting help.
5.	Mardy Gilyard	WR	Sr.	Cincinnati	His breakout junior season included two TDs on kickoff returns.
6.	Nate Allen	S	Sr.	South Florida	Three-year starter with size; moving up fast on 2010 mock drafts.
7.	Jason Pinkston	OT	Jr.	Pittsburgh	Showed NFL promise starting 12 games at LT as a sophomore.
8.	Nate Byham	TE	Sr.	Pittsburgh	Known for his blocking, he also caught 20 passes last season.
9.	Robert Vaughn	S	Sr.	Connecticut	Active FS and three-year starter; nine INTs in past two years.
10.	Noel Devine	RB	Jr.	West Virginia	Scouts will ignore his size when he runs a 4.2 at NFL Combine.

Mountaineers Top Big East Rankings

1. WEST VIRGINIA
There was an early adjustment period for coach Bill Stewart, but the Mountaineers finished strong on the field and did well on the recruiting trail. Wide receivers Stedman Bailey, Logan Heastie and Deon Long make it all but certain that West Virginia will have plenty of big-play threats down the road. Quarterback Eugene Smith looks like the real deal.

2. USF
The Bulls signed a whopping 30 prospects, most of them on defense. There are six ends and four linebackers in this group, and all of them move well for their size. Rush end Ryne Giddins is the only Big East signee in the Rivals100.

3. RUTGERS
While this class would have been stronger if the Scarlet Knights could have held on to recruits such as Desmond Scott, Gerald Hodges and Mark Brazinski, they still had a good haul. Quarterback Tom Savage is one of the most highly touted recruits in Rutgers history, and there are plenty of expectations.

4. PITTSBURGH
Dave Wannstedt continues to stockpile talent, and that should become easier now that there are clear signs of progress on the field. The Panthers signed five running backs in the hopes of finding a legitimate replacement for LeSean McCoy.

5. CINCINNATI
The Bearcats followed up their Big East title with one of their better recruiting classes, and it started with their ability to keep talent close to home. They signed seven prospects from Cincinnati and also did a nice job of reaching into Indiana and Michigan.

6. CONNECTICUT
The Huskies continue to garner more respect as the victories pile up, and that's helping their recruiting efforts. Four-star wide receiver Dwayne Difton is one of the biggest recruits in the history of UConn football. It will be interesting to see if more prospects of his caliber join him in the coming years.

7. LOUISVILLE
Offensive lineman Joe Evinger could be an early contributor, and wide receiver Sean Farr has plenty of talent. However, this isn't one of the better classes in recent memory for the Cardinals.

8. SYRACUSE
Just 14 prospects signed with the Orange, who had to deal with a coaching change. The staff did manage to generate some excitement toward the end of the process. Syracuse signed a good class of defensive backs, including Dale Peterman from Ohio, and Rishard Anderson and Phillip Thomas from Florida.

TOP 20 INCOMING RECRUITS

RK	NAME	HT/WT	POS	HOMETOWN/SCHOOL	COLLEGE
1.	Ryne Giddins	6-4/235	DE	Seffner (Fla.) Armwood	USF
2.	Jason Pierre-Paul	6-6/265	DE	Fort Scott (Kan.) CC	USF
3.	Tom Savage	6-4/217	QB	Springfield (Pa.) Cardinal O'Hara	Rutgers
4.	De'Antwan Williams	5-6/185	RB	Woodbridge (Va.) High	Rutgers
5.	Eugene Smith	6-3/182	QB	Miramar (Fla.) High	West Virginia
6.	Todd Thomas	6-3/200	WR	Beaver Falls (Pa.) High	Pittsburgh
7.	Jack Lippert	6-3/243	DE	Harrisburg (Pa.) Central Dauphin	Pittsburgh
8.	Bradley Battles	5-9/179	ATH	Marianna (Fla.) High	USF
9.	Chris Williams	5-11/185	DB	Cincinnati Winton Woods	Cincinnati
10.	Isaac Holmes	6-3/295	DT	Hoboken (N.J.) High	Rutgers
11.	Raymond Graham	5-9/177	RB	Elizabeth (N.J.) High	Pittsburgh
12.	Dwayne Difton	5-11/166	WR	Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas	Connecticut
13.	Logan Heastie	6-2/196	WR	Chesapeake (Va.) Great Bridge	West Virginia
14.	Adaris Bellamy	5-10/214	RB	Dunedin (Fla.) High	USF
15.	Deon Long	6-0/186	WR	Washington (D.C.) Dunbar	West Virginia
16.	Logan Ryan	5-11/175	DB	Voorhees (N.J.) Eastern	Rutgers
17.	Dan Mason	6-0/220	LB	Pittsburgh Penn Hills	Pittsburgh
18.	Stedman Bailey	5-11/186	WR	Miramar (Fla.) High	West Virginia
19.	Tavon Austin	5-9/156	RB	Baltimore Dunbar	West Virginia
20.	Jacquain Williams	6-4/240	LB	Fort Scott (Kan.) CC	USF

TOP NEWCOMER:
It's understandable that defensive ends would be interested in USF these days after watching George Selvie dominate the competition. So, it should come as no surprise that pass-rusher Ryne Giddins — from Armwood High in the Tampa suburb of Seffner — would want to be a Bull. Giddins runs the 40-yard dash in 4.6 seconds and was the No. 61 prospect in the Rivals100.

TOP SLEEPER:
Athlete Leon Kinnard made a lot of noise throughout his playing career at Baltimore Loyola, and the home-state Terrapins wanted to keep him nearby for college. But he committed to UConn early and stuck with the Huskies throughout the process. Kinnard could line up at running back, wide receiver or defensive back, and his 40-yard dash time of 4.43 seconds is impressive.

LIKELY TO BE THE BEST NFL PLAYER:
This honor could go to Giddins. But if you're looking for another player to keep your eye on, then check out Rutgers-bound quarterback Tom Savage. He has great size (6-4/217) and a cannon arm. Quarterbacks are tough to project, but Savage seems to have all the tools.

NO. 1 SIGNING COUP:
Few believed UConn had a realistic shot at landing four-star Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas receiver Dwayne Difton. He turned down offers from some big-time programs, including some much closer to home, to make the trip north for his college years. He is the biggest signee at UConn under Randy Edsall.

BIGGEST MISS:
There are a few who got away from Rutgers, and one of the biggest was linebacker Gerald Hodges. A tremendous athlete, Hodges was an early commitment to the Scarlet Knights. However, he decided to head to Penn State and become a part of the Nittany Lions' linebacker tradition.

BEST RECRUITING STAFF:
It's tough to argue against West Virginia. Despite the loss of Rich Rodriguez, the Mountaineers didn't miss a beat on the recruiting trail. They landed the No. 27 class in the nation, thanks to fullbacks coach/recruiting coordinator Doc Holliday and running backs coach Chris Beatty - who coached Percy Harvin in high school.

WEST VIRGINIA MOUNTAINEERS

NATIONAL RANK 20

Big East rank: 1 | Record: 9-4 | Big East record: 5-2 (T-2nd) | Stadium: Mountaineer Field (60,000)

Mountaineers in A Box

COACH: Bill Stewart — At West Virginia: 9-4, 1 year; overall: 18-29, 4 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jeff Mullen
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jeff Casteel
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2007
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2001
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 7 offense, 7 defense
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Jarrett Brown, RB Noel Devine, RT Selvish Capers, NT Scooter Berry, LB Reed Williams, CB Brandon Hogan
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: In Noel Devine, the Mountaineers have a running back who can go zero-to-60 faster than a luxury sports car. Jarrett Brown should be a very capable replacement for Pat White and the defense is chock-full of returning starters. Plus WVU is used to winning and expects to win the Big East every year.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: What if Brown gets hurt or somehow flops in White's stead? The offensive line has to absorb some major losses, including two-time All-America Ryan Stanchek. Underrated K-P Pat McAfee made his share of clutch kicks the last four years. Can someone emerge to fill his shoes?

OFFENSE

Long-time backup quarterback Jarrett Brown has waited three years. Now, all he has to do is replace Pat White, who established 25 school, conference and NCAA records in a four-year career in which he compiled more than 10,000 total yards.

Thought of as a superior passer, Brown also has enough mobility to make key yards with his feet. He's won both career starts — including a three-overtime win over Rutgers in 2007 that denied the Scarlet Knights the Big East's BCS bid.

He'll have help from Noel Devine, a junior who rolled up 1,289 yards and averaged 6.3 yards per carry last year. Devine is the top returning rusher in the Big East and also adds to the passing game, notching 35 receptions in 2008.

Alric Arnett is the leading man at wide receiver after hauling in 35 passes last year, including six for touchdowns. Arnett and Bradley Starks came up big in a bowl win over North Carolina, combining for 11 receptions, 154 yards and three scores.

The line, which has been a source of satisfaction for years in Morgantown, is a reason for concern entering the season. The Mountaineers lose two-time All-American Ryan Stanchek, Greg Isdaner and Jake Figner up front.

Selvish Capers is a proven option at right tackle, and Eric Jobe did good work at center when Mike Dent was lost with an injury in November, but it might take this inexperienced unit time to create chemistry.

DEFENSE

WVU fashioned one of the nation's stingiest scoring defenses last season, and has 18 players on the two-deep with at least one career start.

The Mountaineers appear particularly deep at linebacker. The return of Reed Williams, who missed most of last season with double shoulder surgery, gives the team three veterans at the position, although it's likely either he or Anthony Leonard will have to settle for a reserve role. Leonard started last season, making 59 tackles,

Up front, Scooter Berry is moving from end to nose tackle, opening up a starting spot for emerging pass rusher Julian Miller, who had 3.5 sacks in November. Berry and defensive tackle Chris Neild should do a good job stuffing the run.

Cornerback Brandon Hogan is the man to watch in the secondary after finishing with 60 tackles and breaking up seven passes. Strong safety Sidney Glover finished with 61 stops in 2008 and forced a key fumble in the bowl win over North Carolina.

There seems to be enough depth to capably fill openings at one cornerback spot and bandit safety.

SPECIAL TEAMS

West Virginia faces a huge task in replacing Pat McAfee, who handling placements, punts and kickoff duties. Freshman Tyler Bitancurt is the favorite to boot PATs and field goals, while senior Scott Kozlowski appears to be the choice to punt.

Noel Devine gives WVU a game-breaking threat any time he settles under a kickoff. Brandon Hogan, a standout quarterback during his high school days, figures to handle punt returns.

OVERVIEW

Much of the season depends on if a new offensive line can keep Jarrett Brown intact and create creases for the explosive Noel Devine. It would be a surprise if Brown couldn't handle the starting job. The defense should be improved, which might come in handy until the O-line can cohere. The Mountaineers figure to contend for the Big East title again.

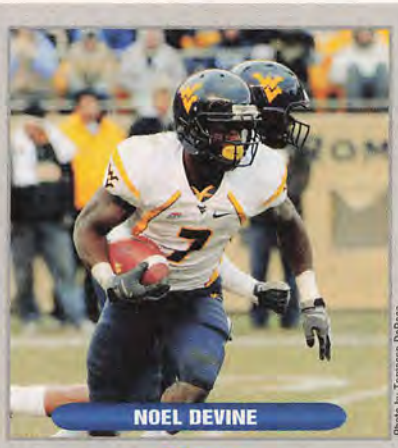

NOEL DEVINE

Photo by Tomasso DeRosa

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Jarrett Brown	6-4	221	Sr.
	Coley White	6-0	174	Fr.
RB	**Noel Devine***	**5-8**	**175**	**Jr.**
	Mark Rodgers	5-8	174	So.
RB	**Will Johnson***	**6-2**	**232**	**Jr.**
	Ricky Kovatch	6-2	239	So.
WR	**Alric Arnett***	**6-2**	**187**	**Sr.**
	Wes Lyons	6-8	231	Sr.
WR	**Bradley Starks***	**6-3**	**188**	**So.**
	Gino Crump	6-1	214	Jr.
TE	**Tyler Urban***	**6-5**	**244**	**So.**
	Tyler Rader	6-3	252	So.
LT	Don Barclay	6-4	298	So.
	Levi Pardee	6-6	302	Fr.
LG	Josh Jenkins	6-3	298	So.
	Chad Snodgrass	6-4	291	So.
C	**Eric Jobe***	**6-2**	**284**	**Jr.**
	Gino Gradkowski	6-3	292	So.
RG	Matt Timmerman	6-3	282	Jr.
	Jeff Braun	6-4	307	Fr.
RT	**Selvish Capers***	**6-5**	**298**	**Sr.**
	Jon Walko	6-6	289	Sr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Julian Miller	6-4	248	So.
	Larry Ford	6-3	255	Jr.
DT	**Chris Neild***	**6-2**	**298**	**Jr.**
	Josh Taylor	6-1	263	So.
NT	**Scooter Berry***	**6-1**	**280**	**Jr.**
	Jorge Wright	6-2	270	Fr.
LB	Zac Cooper	6-3	230	Sr.
	Najae Goode	6-1	231	So.
LB	Reed Williams	6-1	228	Sr.
	Anthony Leonard *	**6-1**	**240**	**Jr.**
LB	**J.T. Thomas***	**6-2**	**224**	**Jr.**
	Ovid Gouldbourne	6-1	220	Sr.
CB	**Brandon Hogan***	**5-10**	**188**	**Jr.**
	Guesly Dervil	5-11	188	Sr.
CB	Keith Tandy	5-10	198	So.
	Kent Richardson	5-11	198	Sr.
S	Franchot Allen	6-0	208	Sr.
	Courtney Stuart	6-2	210	Jr.
SS	**Sidney Glover***	**5-11**	**210**	**Jr.**
	Nate Sowers	6-1	208	Sr.
FS	**Robert Sands***	**6-5**	**211**	**So.**
	Eain Smith	5-11	200	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Tyler Bitancurt	6-1	188	Fr.
P	Scott Kozlowski	5-11	191	Sr.

*** Returning Starters in Bold**

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	LIBERTY
Sept. 12	EAST CAROLINA
Sept. 19	at Auburn
Oct. 1	COLORADO
Oct. 10	at Syracuse
Oct. 17	MARSHALL
Oct. 24	CONNECTICUT
Oct. 30	at South Florida
Nov. 7	LOUISVILLE
Nov. 13	at Cincinnati
Nov. 27	PITTSBURGH
Dec. 5	at Rutgers

2008 Results

(9-4, 5-2)

W	VILLANOVA	48-21
L	at East Carolina	3-24
L	at Colorado (OT)	14-17
W	MARSHALL	27-3
W	RUTGERS	24-17
W	SYRACUSE	17-6
W	AUBURN	34-17
W	at Connecticut	35-13
L	CINCINNATI (OT)	23-26
W	at Louisville	35-21
L	at Pittsburgh	15-19
W	SOUTH FLORIDA	13-7
	Meineke Car Care Bowl	
W	vs. North Carolina	31-30

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.5	73
Rushing	209.9	15
Passing	150.5	104
Total	360.4	59
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	17.0	11
Rushing	131.6	41
Passing	197.3	47
Total	328.9	36
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 12	+ 0.92	16

RUTGERS SCARLET KNIGHTS

NATIONAL RANK 38

Big East rank: 2 | Record: 8-5 | Big East record: 5-2 (T-2nd) | Stadium: Rutgers Stadium (55,000)

Scarlet Knights in A Box

COACH: Greg Schiano — At Rutgers and overall: 46-51, 8 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Kyle Flood and Kirk Ciarrocca
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Bob Fraser and Ed Pinkham
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: None
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2004
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 8 offense, 6 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: OT Anthony Davis, WR Tim Brown, C Ryan Blaszczyk, MLB Ryan D'Imperio, DE George Johnson, CB Devin McCourty
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: A top-flight offensive line with five returning starters and a defense that has a chance to be a good one should carry the Knights a long way. There's depth at running back as well. Brown, an explosive receiver, has been waiting for the stage to be his. It is now.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: It's anybody's guess what kind of play Rutgers will get at quarterback. Domenic Natale can manage the offense but lacks a strong throwing arm. Jabu Lovelace, coming off a second ankle surgery, is known more as a runner than a passer. The wide receiver ranks are thin as well.

OFFENSE

How quickly can Rutgers replace the most accomplished quarterback in school history (Mike Teel) and the best wide receiver (Kenny Britt) the program has ever produced?

The answers hold the key to the season.

The offensive line returns intact, anchored by future first-round pick Anthony Davis at left tackle, and all four tailbacks return. Tight end Shamar Graves is back as well. But the uncertainty at quarterback is a nagging concern.

Fifth-year seniors Domenic Natale and Jabu Lovelace, who combined for eight pass attempts last season, are the frontrunners in the quarterback battle — at least until heralded true freshman Tom Savage is ready.

Senior wide receiver Tim Brown, who averaged 20.9 yards on 27 catches last season, has to make the transition to being the go-to guy after serving as a complementary wideout his whole career.

The running game should be solid, with Joe Martinek expected to have an expanded role. Veteran Jack Corcoran returns at fullback.

Rutgers, which led the Big East in scoring a year ago, might offer a few new wrinkles — an occasional option look is possible — under co-coordinators Kirk Ciarrocca and Kyle Flood. They replace John McNulty, who left to take a job with the Arizona Cardinals.

DEFENSE

Head coach Greg Schiano's decision to relinquish the added duties of defensive coordinator that he had held since 2005 is the only uncertainty about the unit. He handed the reins to assistants Bob Fraser and Ed Pinkham — yes, co-coordinators on defense, too.

With middle linebacker Ryan D'Imperio and defensive end George Johnson poised for big years, this could be the Big East's best defense.

Alex Silvestro, a stalwart at tackle last year, is shifting to end, leaving the interior positions to Blair Bines and Charlie Noonan for now. There's more depth and size on the defensive line than at any time in Schiano's previous eight years as head coach.

A pair of young tackles who missed last season — sophomore Justin Francis and redshirt freshman Scott Vallone — could see ample time this time around.

D'Imperio, who had 93 tackles last season (12.5 for loss), heads a linebacking crew that could be special, with Damaso Munoz and Antonio Lowery on the outside and Manny Abreu in reserve.

There is concern at one of the cornerback spots, but the other is in good hands with three-year starter Devin McCourty. There's experience at the secondary positions with Joe Lefeged and Zaire Kitchen, as well as depth with rising second-year players Khaseem Greene and Patrick Kivlehan.

SPECIAL TEAMS

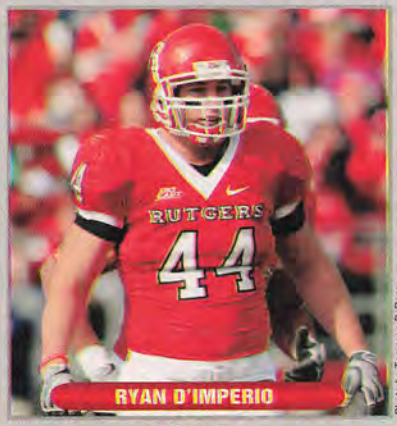
New special teams coordinator Robb Smith inherits two of the most promising specialists in the league in sophomore placekicker San San Te and junior punter Teddy Dellaganna, as well as a unit that ranked second in the Big East in punt return average.

Te, who made 12 of 17 field goals last year, is expected to show major improvement after undergoing offseason back surgery.

OVERVIEW

Bowl games have become a staple at Rutgers. That doesn't figure to change. But with Rutgers Stadium expanding to 55,000 seats, many of the Knights' fans will no doubt want more.

Is this the year Rutgers finally wins its first Big East title? It all depends on what kind of play the Knights get at quarterback. At worst, a fifth straight bowl appearance looks solid.



RYAN D'IMPERIO

Photo by Tomasso DeRosa

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Domenic Natale	6-2	210	Sr.
	Jabu Lovelace	6-2	215	Sr.
RB	Joe Martinek	6-0	215	So.
	Kordell Young*	**5-9**	**185**	**Jr.**
FB	**Jack Corcoran***	**6-1**	**230**	**Sr.**
	Andres Morales	6-2	250	Jr.
WR	Tim Brown	5-8	185	Sr.
	Andrew DePaola	6-2	205	Sr.
WR	Mohamed Sanu	6-2	205	Fr.
	Julian Hayes	6-1	215	Jr.
TE	**Shamar Graves***	**6-3**	**230**	**Jr.**
	Paul Carrezola	6-2	250	Fr.
LT	**Anthony Davis***	**6-6**	**325**	**Jr.**
	Desmond Stapleton	6-5	280	So.
LG	**Caleb Ruch***	**6-4**	**285**	**So.**
	Howard Barbieri	6-5	295	Jr.
C	**Ryan Blaszczyk***	**6-4**	**295**	**Sr.**
	Matthew Hardison	6-4	280	So.
RG	**Art Forst***	**6-8**	**310**	**So.**
	Desmond Wynn	6-6	275	So.
RT	**Kevin Haslam***	**6-7**	**295**	**Sr.**
	Devon Watkis	6-7	320	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**George Johnson***	**6-4**	**260**	**Sr.**
	Sorie Bayoh	6-3	245	Jr.
NT	Charlie Noonan	6-2	265	Jr.
	Eric LeGrand	6-2	240	So.
DT	Blair Bines	6-2	260	Sr.
	Justin Francis	6-4	260	So.
DE	**Alex Silvestro***	**6-4**	**250**	**Jr.**
	Jonathan Freeny	6-3	240	Jr.
LB	Antonio Lowery	6-2	225	Jr.
	Manny Abreu	6-3	245	So.
LB	**Ryan D'Imperio***	**6-3**	**240**	**Sr.**
	Jim Dumont	6-1	215	Jr.
LB	**Damaso Munoz***	**6-0**	**215**	**Sr.**
	Edmond Laryea	6-1	215	Jr.
CB	**Devin McCourty***	**5-11**	**185**	**Sr.**
	Billy Anderson	6-0	185	Sr.
CB	David Rowe	6-0	195	So.
	Brandon Bing	5-11	165	Jr.
SS	**Joe Lefeged***	**6-1**	**200**	**Jr.**
	Patrick Kivlehan	6-2	205	So.
FS	Zaire Kitchen	6-2	215	Sr.
	Khaseem Greene	6-1	195	Fr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**San San Te***	**5-9**	**180**	**So.**
P	**Teddy Dellaganna***	**6-2**	**210**	**Jr.**

*** Returning Starters in Bold**

2009 Schedule

Sept. 7	CINCINNATI
Sept. 12	HOWARD
Sept. 19	FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
Sept. 26	at Maryland
Oct. 3	TEXAS SOUTHERN
Oct. 16	PITTSBURGH
Oct. 23	at Army
Oct. 31	at Connecticut
Nov. 12	SOUTH FLORIDA
Nov. 21	at Syracuse
Nov. 27	at Louisville
Dec. 5	WEST VIRGINIA

2008 Results

	(8-5, 5-2)	
L	FRESNO STATE	7-24
L	NORTH CAROLINA	12-44
L	at Navy	21-23
W	MORGAN STATE	38-0
L	at West Virginia	17-24
L	at Cincinnati	10-13
W	CONNECTICUT	12-10
W	at Pittsburgh	54-34
W	SYRACUSE	35-17
W	at South Florida	49-16
W	ARMY	30-3
W	LOUISVILLE	63-14
	Papajohns.com Bowl	
W	vs. NC State	29-23

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	29.0	39
Rushing	128.0	80
Passing	270.4	18
Total	398.4	39
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	18.9	19
Rushing	135.6	47
Passing	191.3	36
Total	326.9	33
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 1	+ 0.08	55

CINCINNATI BEARCATS

NATIONAL RANK 39

Big East rank: 3 | Record: 11-3 | Big East record: 6-1 (1st) | Stadium: Nippert Stadium (35,000)

Bearcats in A Box

COACH: Brian Kelly — At Cincinnati: 22-6, 2 years; overall: 158-57-2, 18 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jeff Quinn
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bob Diaco
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2008
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2005
RETURNING STARTERS: 9; 7 offense, 1 defense, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Tony Pike, WR Mardy Gilyard, LT Jeff Linkenbach, RB Isaiah Pead, FS Aaron Webster, K Jake Rogers, CB Marcus Barnett
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The offense will be led by Pike, who emerged out of nowhere last season. Gilyard is a big-time receiver and return man. The offensive line is deeper and more talented than Kelly's first two.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The defense is a huge question mark after losing 10 starters. On offense, Cincinnati will miss WR Dominick Goodman, who left as the school's career receptions leader. The running game hasn't been strong enough. And the kicking game remains inconsistent.

OFFENSE

The Bearcats will be formidable, led by Mardy Gilyard, who was one of the league's top receivers in 2008, and quarterback Tony Pike, who figures to be the league's best passer.

And they've added potential breakaway threats in running back Isaiah Pead, who saw limited action last year as a freshman, and Darrin Williams, who redshirted last year.

They'll compete with returnees Jacob Ramsey and John Goebel, who shared the position last year and gained 1,271 yards between them.

At 6-6, Pike has the size to survey the field, and he demonstrated a surprising elusiveness last year after he took over for the injured Dustin Grutza, who broke his leg in game two at Oklahoma.

Having risen from third string at the start of fall camp to No. 1, Pike proceeded to complete 61.4 percent of his passes for 2,407 yards with 19 touchdowns and 11 interceptions after he had been all but written off during training camp.

The line is anchored by left tackle Jeff Linkenbach, a potential all-league performer. Coach Brian Kelly calls this the deepest and most talented line he's had during his three years.

At receiver, D.J. Woods showed vast potential last year as a freshman. Armon Binns was Cincinnati's most impressive receiver during spring practice and might also be ready for a breakout. Junior college transfer Jamar Howard could help, too.

DEFENSE

Free safety Aaron Webster is the only returning starter, but Cincinnati does have some replacements who saw extensive action last year, plus strong safety Drew Frey, who was a starter before he broke his arm against Akron in the fourth game of the season.

Kelly is using the transition period as an opportunity to switch from a 4-3 alignment to a 3-4.

Cincinnati will be hard-pressed to replace four players who were drafted by NFL teams, including defensive end Connor Barwin, who led the Big East in sacks. The draftees don't even include tackle Terrill Byrd, a second-team All-American in 2007 who anchored the line for the past four years.

Kelly believes he has plenty of depth on the line, where sophomore Derek Wolfe, an imposing specimen at 6-5, 302 pounds, could be a force.

In an attempt to strengthen the secondary, Kelly switched Marcus Barnett, one of his top receivers two years ago, to cornerback. Barnett responded so well that he has been penciled in as a starter.

Kelly also moved two offensive players to linebacker. Former fullback Marcus Waugh is expected to start on the inside, and former Notre Dame quarterback Demetrius Jones shows promise on the outside.

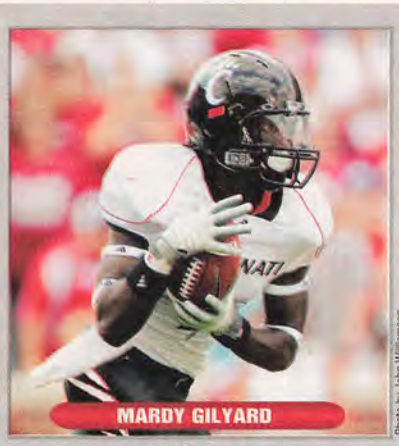
SPECIAL TEAMS

With All-American Kevin Huber gone, the Bearcats will probably rely on incoming freshman Patrick O'Donnell to handle the punting chores. Placekicker Jake Rogers has a strong enough leg to connect from 45 to 50 yards, but after two years he still has trouble with consistency.

Gilyard, one of the top kick returners in the country, provides an explosive special teams threat.

OVERVIEW

The Bearcats cemented their position on the national scene last year with their trip to the Orange Bowl and a second straight No. 17 ranking in the final Associated Press poll. With so much inexperience on defense, they might have to rely on Pike and a talented offense to put up big numbers, but they appear to have the weapons to challenge for a second straight Big East title.



MARDY GILYARD

Photo by John Williamson

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Tony Pike***	**6-6**	**210**	**Sr.**
	Chazz Anderson	6-0	209	So.
RB	**John Goebel***	**6-1**	**213**	**Jr.**
	Jacob Ramsey	6-0	216	Sr.
WR	**Mardy Gilyard***	**6-1**	**187**	**Sr.**
	O.J. Woodard	6-2	214	So.
WR	Jamar Howard	6-4	210	Jr.
	Armon Binns	6-4	200	Jr.
WR	D.J. Woods	6-0	175	So.
	Danny Milligan	5-9	171	Fr.
TE	Kazeem Alli	6-4	258	Sr.
	Ben Guidugli*	**6-0**	**237**	**Jr.**
LT	**Jeff Linkenbach***	**6-6**	**311**	**Sr.**
	Sean Hooey	6-8	296	Fr.
LG	**Jason Kelce***	**6-4**	**290**	**Jr.**
	Randy Martinez	6-1	277	So.
C	**Chris Jurek***	**6-2**	**286**	**Sr.**
	Evan Davis	6-4	262	So.
RG	Alex Hoffman	6-5	293	So.
	C.J. Cobb	6-4	304	Jr.
RT	Sam Griffin	6-4	260	Jr.
	Craig Parmenter	6-5	289	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
LE	Curtis Young	6-1	269	Sr.
	Alex Daniels	6-4	259	Sr.
DT	Ricardo Mathews	6-3	294	Sr.
	Rob Trigg	6-3	264	Jr.
DT	Derek Wolfe	6-5	302	So.
	Brandon Mills	5-10	266	Fr.
RE	John Hughes	6-2	305	So.
	Walter Stewart	6-5	226	Fr.
LB	J.K. Schaffer	6-1	223	So.
	Collin McCafferty	6-3	222	Jr.
LB	Marcus Waugh	6-0	270	Sr.
	Alex Delisi	6-2	225	So.
LB	Craig Carey	6-4	248	Sr.
	Robby Armstrong	6-2	222	Jr.
CB	Brad Jones	6-1	202	Sr.
	Trammel Williams	5-9	185	So.
CB	Marcus Barnett	6-2	174	Jr.
	Dominique Battle	6-0	184	So.
SS	Drew Frey	6-4	205	Fr.
	Quincy Quetant	6-1	209	Fr.
FS	**Aaron Webster***	**6-2**	**211**	**Sr.**
	Patrick Lambert	6-1	193	Fr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Jake Rogers***	**6-3**	**205**	**Jr.**
P	Patrick O'Donnell	6-5	210	Fr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 7	at Rutgers
Sept. 12	S.E. MISSOURI STATE
Sept. 19	at Oregon State
Sept. 26	FRESNO STATE
Oct. 3	at Miami (OH)
Oct. 15	at South Florida
Oct. 24	LOUISVILLE
Oct. 31	at Syracuse
Nov. 7	CONNECTICUT
Nov. 13	WEST VIRGINIA
Nov. 27	ILLINOIS
Dec. 5	at Pittsburgh

2008 Results

	(11-3, 6-1)	
W	EASTERN KENTUCKY	40-7
L	at Oklahoma	26-52
W	MIAMI (OH)	45-20
W	at Akron	17-15
W	at Marshall	33-10
W	RUTGERS	13-10
L	at Connecticut	16-40
W	SOUTH FLORIDA	24-10
W	at West Virginia (OT)	26-23
W	at Louisville	28-20
W	PITTSBURGH	28-21
W	SYRACUSE	30-10
W	at Hawaii	29-24
	Orange Bowl	
L	vs. Virginia Tech	7-20

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.9	55
Rushing	117.6	95
Passing	253.0	26
Total	370.6	52
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	20.1	25
Rushing	115.0	19
Passing	206.9	57
Total	321.9	31
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 8	- 0.57	93

PITTSBURGH PANTHERS

NATIONAL RANK 41

Big East rank: 4 | Record: 9-4 | Big East record: 5-2 (T-2nd) | Stadium: Heinz Field (65,050)

Panthers in A Box

COACH: Dave Wannstedt — At Pitt and overall: 25-23, 4 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Frank Cignetti
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Phil Bennett
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2004
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 7 offense, 7 defense
PLAYERS TO WATCH: WR Jonathan Baldwin, TE Dorin Dickerson, TE Nate Byham, LT Jason Pinkston, DT Mick Williams, DE Greg Romeus, DE Jabaal Sheard, CB Aaron Berry
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The defensive line should be one of the best in the country, and Pitt — because of ends Romeus and Sheard — will be able to pressure QBs without blitzing. The offensive line could be the best of the Wannstedt era. Baldwin and both tight ends are playmakers.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Pitt's quarterback position is in the same hands it has been in for the past two seasons — and that's not necessarily a good thing. Worse, tailback LeSean McCoy left for the NFL and won't be around to carry the load.

OFFENSE

Senior Bill Stull was the starting quarterback last season and junior Pat Bostick was the starter in 2007, so the Panthers have two experienced quarterbacks.

The problem is, neither distinguished himself during his time as the starter. More often than not, their main contribution to the team was just not making mistakes.

However, with superstar tailback LeSean McCoy off early to the NFL, the Panthers will need their quarterbacks to do more than just manage games; they'll need to make plays.

There are plenty of important pieces surrounding the quarterback position. The Panthers have big-play tight ends in seniors Dorin Dickerson and Nate Byham, and they have a big-play receiver in 6-5 sophomore Jonathan Baldwin (22.4 yards per catch, three touchdowns last year).

While there is no All-American candidate at tailback to replace McCoy, freshman Dion Lewis and redshirt freshman Chris Burns are capable of giving the Panthers a strong running attack.

The offensive line has some experience and, more importantly, more natural talent than in recent years. It should be the best unit of the Wannstedt era.

Left tackle Jason Pinkston and right guard John Malecki are among the best linemen in the Big East. The unit's two newcomers — sophomore right tackle Lucas Nix and redshirt sophomore Chris Jacobson — were two of the highest ranked linemen ever signed by Pitt.

DEFENSE

The defense could be special, and that's mostly because the line is one of the best, and certainly one of the deepest, in the country.

The line is anchored by 6-1, 285-pound senior Mick Williams, a dominant force in the middle who might be the Panthers' best defensive player. Pitt also features the best tandem of ends in the Big East in juniors Greg Romeus (6-5, 7.5 sacks) and Jabaal Sheard (6-4, 5.5 sacks).

The linebacker unit took a huge hit with the graduation of middle linebacker Scott McKillop, but the loss was eased when Adam Gunn was granted a sixth year of eligibility. He's the same kind of heady, tough player as McKillop.

Plus, the Panthers have a budding star in speedy outside linebacker Greg Williams, who was thrust into a starting job last year when Gunn (neck) was injured.

The secondary should be much improved. Three starters return, and strong safety Elijah Fields will finally have an opportunity to realize his enormous potential as the full-time starter.

Fields is fast enough to play defensive back, and big and physical enough to play linebacker.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The kicking game is a huge question as punter Dave Brytus and All-Big East kicker Conor Lee have graduated. Both duties, at least as of the end of spring, will be handled by junior walk-on Dan Hutchins.

Pitt must find a long-snapper to replace steady Mark Estermyer, a four-year starter. The Panthers should have good return units, as Wannstedt has recruited a number of capable young athletes to handle the duties.

OVERVIEW

Pitt will contend for the Big East championship on the strength of its defense, but the Panthers will need to develop a consistent passing game in order to win it and get to a BCS bowl for the first time in the Wannstedt era. At some point, the offense is going to have to carry its share of the load.

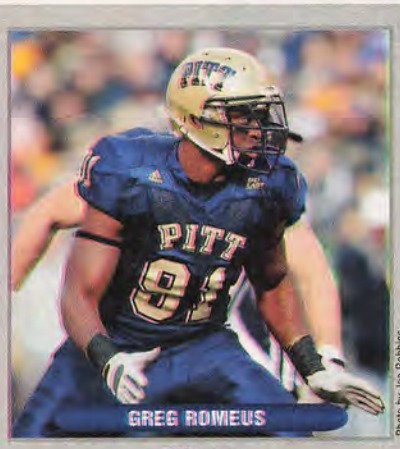


Photo by Joe Robbins

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Bill Stull***	**6-3**	**215**	**Sr.**
	Pat Bostick	6-3	220	Jr.
TB	Dion Lewis	5-8	190	Fr.
	Chris Burns	5-11	190	Fr.
FB	Henry Hynoski	6-2	250	So.
	Joe Capp	5-10	220	Jr.
WR	Jonathan Baldwin	6-5	220	So.
	Oderick Turner*	**6-3**	**205**	**Sr.**
WR	Cedric McGee	6-1	205	Sr.
	Aundre Wright	5-11	180	So.
TE	**Nate Byham***	**6-3**	**255**	**Sr.**
	Dorin Dickerson	6-2	230	Sr.
LT	**Jason Pinkston***	**6-4**	**300**	**Jr.**
	Jordan Gibbs	6-7	290	So.
LG	Chris Jacobson	6-3	290	So.
	Joe Thomas*	**6-5**	**300**	**Sr.**
C	**Robb Houser***	**6-2**	**285**	**Sr.**
	Alex Karabin	6-1	290	Jr.
RG	**John Malecki***	**6-3**	**280**	**Sr.**
	Jared Martin	6-2	285	Jr.
RT	Lucas Nix	6-6	300	So.
	Greg Gaskins	6-4	295	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Greg Romeus***	**6-5**	**265**	**Jr.**
	Tony Tucker	6-2	235	So.
DT	**Mick Williams***	**6-1**	**285**	**Sr.**
	Gus Mustakas	6-3	280	Sr.
NT	Myles Caragein	6-2	275	So.
	Craig Bokor	6-3	290	Sr.
DE	**Jabaal Sheard***	**6-4**	**250**	**Jr.**
	Shayne Hale	6-4	240	Fr.
LB	Max Gruder	6-2	235	So.
	Tristan Roberts	6-0	230	So.
LB	Adam Gunn	6-2	230	Sr.
	Steve Dell	6-1	235	Sr.
LB	**Greg Williams***	**6-3**	**225**	**So.**
	Nate Nix	6-3	235	Jr.
CB	**Aaron Berry***	**5-11**	**175**	**Sr.**
	Antwuan Reed	5-10	180	So.
CB	**Jovani Chappel***	**5-9**	**180**	**Sr.**
	Buddy Jackson	6-0	175	So.
SS	**Dom DeCicco***	**6-3**	**220**	**Jr.**
	Irvan Brown	6-0	205	Sr.
FS	Elijah Fields	6-2	220	Jr.
	Andrew Taglianetti	5-11	175	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Dan Hutchins	5-11	190	Jr.
P	Dan Hutchins	5-11	190	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	YOUNGSTOWN STATE
Sept. 12	at Buffalo
Sept. 19	NAVY
Sept. 26	at North Carolina State
Oct. 2	at Louisville
Oct. 10	CONNECTICUT
Oct. 16	at Rutgers
Oct. 24	SOUTH FLORIDA
Nov. 7	SYRACUSE
Nov. 14	NOTRE DAME
Nov. 27	at West Virginia
Dec. 5	CINCINNATI

2008 Results

	(9-4, 5-2)	
L	BOWLING GREEN	17-27
W	BUFFALO	27-16
W	IOWA	21-20
W	at Syracuse	34-24
W	at South Florida	26-21
W	at Navy	42-21
L	RUTGERS	34-54
W	at Notre Dame (OT)	36-33
W	LOUISVILLE	41-7
L	at Cincinnati	21-28
W	WEST VIRGINIA	19-15
W	at Connecticut	34-10
	Sun Bowl	
L	vs. Oregon State	0-3

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.1	50
Rushing	139.1	65
Passing	203.4	68
Total	342.5	77
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	21.5	35
Rushing	124.2	29
Passing	193.0	38
Total	317.2	27
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-3	-.23	73

SOUTH FLORIDA BULLS

NATIONAL RANK 43

Big East rank: 5 | Record: 8-5 | Big East record: 2-5 (6th) | Stadium: Raymond James Stadium (65,857)

Bulls in A Box

COACH: Jim Leavitt — At USF and overall: 87-52, 12 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Canales
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Joe Tresey, David Blackwell
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: None
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2004
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 5 offense, 6 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Matt Grothe, WR Jessie Hester, DE George Selvie, DT Terrell McClain, LB Kion Wilson, FS Nate Allen
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Selvie is a big-play guy on defense. Grothe is a dual threat on offense and he will have two of his top three receivers back in Hester and A.J. Love. The kicking game looks strong with the return of P Delbert Alvarado and PK Maikon Bonani.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The offensive line must replace three starters and find a tight end to replace Cedric Hill, a second-team All-Big East selection. Two redshirt freshmen are listed as starters in the interior going into the fall. The Bulls came out of the spring with several candidates at running back, but none stood out.

OFFENSE

With Mike Canales moving back into the coordinator's seat he occupied from 1997 to 2000, the Bulls hope to regain the momentum they had when they averaged nearly 35 points a game in Big East play in 2007.

They averaged less than half that against conference foes last year, which helps explain the 2-5 Big East effort.

They have only five starters returning on offense, but one is quarterback Matt Grothe, one of the country's top dual threats. Grothe has thrown for more than 8,000 yards and rushed for 2,085 over three seasons.

The Bulls have a deep receiving corps headed by Jessie Hester, who had a team-high 54 receptions, and A.J. Love, who caught 31 balls in 2008. Hester (ankle) and Love (knee) missed the spring, giving juniors Carlton Mitchell and Dontavia Bogan the opportunity to move up the ladder.

Moise Plancher, Mike Ford, Jamar Taylor, Richard Kelly and Aston Samuels will vie to become the featured running back in the spread offensive attack.

The rebuilding project is up front.

Junior Jacob Sims was limited by a broken finger in spring and was not on the post-spring depth chart, but he expects to regain a starting position at either right tackle or center. Zach Hermann returns at right guard after missing the last six games of 2008 with a foot injury.

DEFENSE

USF has new co-coordinators, but don't look for much change in the way end George Selvie operates.

One of the country's top pass rushers with 25.5 career sacks and 61.5 tackles for loss, the senior will still have the flexibility to move around to create blocking problems and put pressure on opposing quarterbacks. He had to deal with constant double teams last fall as his sack numbers dropped from 14.5 in 2007 to 5.5 last year.

Senior Aaron Harris occupies the other end spot. Junior college transfer Jason Pierre-Paul and freshman Ryne Giddins are expected to compete for time when they report.

The Bulls see a lot of promise for junior Terrell McClain at tackle, and Cory Grissom came out of the spring No. 1 at nose tackle after missing all but one game in 2008 because of an ankle injury.

Kion Wilson is a returning starter at middle linebacker. Depth is a concern at linebacker, which is why senior Donte Spires, who took 2008 off to concentrate on academics after playing a prominent role in 2007, is a welcome addition.

Senior free safety Nate Allen, who has five interceptions in the past two years, heads the secondary.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Punter Delbert Alvarado carries a 40.2-yard career average into his final season, and placekicker Maikon Bonani was 15 of 21 on field goals as a freshman last year.

Alvarado will concentrate solely on punting after doing double-duty as a kicker for portions of the past two seasons. Bonani hit the game-winner against Kansas in his debut.

OVERVIEW

The Bulls don't look to have the experience and depth to challenge in the national picture as they did for a while in 2007, but they are hoping for a breakthrough in a Big East that lacks an obvious dominant team. If Grothe gets help on offense and they find a couple of other defenders to give Selvie support, they could be right at the top of the conference.

Photo by Kim Klement-US PRESSWIRE

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Matt Grothe***	**6-0**	**203**	**Sr.**
	B.J. Daniels	6-1	212	Fr.
RB	Moise Plancher	5-9	200	Sr.
	Jamar Taylor	5-9	205	Jr.
WR	Carlton Mitchell	6-4	212	Jr.
	Daniel Bryant	6-2	185	Fr.
WR	**Jessie Hester***	**6-0**	**180**	**Sr.**
	Patrick Richardson	6-0	175	So.
WR	Dontavia Bogan	6-1	185	Jr.
	Theo Wilson	6-0	207	Sr.
WR	**A.J. Love***	**6-2**	**210**	**Jr.**
	(TE) Andrew Ketchel	6-5	240	Jr.
LT	Jatavious Jackson	6-4	270	Fr.
	Jeremiah Warren	6-4	314	So.
LG	Chaz Hine	6-4	292	So.
	Damien Edwards	6-6	314	Fr.
C	Kevin McCaskill	6-2	304	So.
	Sampson Genus	6-1	308	Jr.
RG	**Zach Hermann***	**6-3**	**304**	**Jr.**
	Danous Estenor	6-3	298	So.
RT	Mark Popek	6-7	305	Fr.
	Jacob Sims*	**6-5**	**285**	**Jr.**

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
LE	**Aaron Harris***	**6-4**	**260**	**Sr.**
	Craig Marshall	6-5	260	Jr.
NT	Cory Grissom	6-2	289	Fr.
	Anthony Hill	6-4	290	Fr.
DT	**Terrell McClain***	**6-3**	**306**	**Jr.**
	Keith McCaskill	5-11	263	So.
DE	**George Selvie***	**6-4**	**245**	**Sr.**
	Patrick Hampton	6-3	225	So.
LB	Chris Robinson	6-3	233	Sr.
	Armando Sanchez	5-11	215	Fr.
LB	**Kion Wilson***	**6-2**	**235**	**Sr.**
	Mike Lanaris	6-1	230	Fr.
LB	Sabbath Joseph	6-0	230	Jr.
	Donte Spires	6-3	222	Sr.
CB	Quenton Washington	5-10	183	So.
	Tyson Butler	5-11	184	So.
CB	**Jerome Murphy***	**6-1**	**190**	**Sr.**
	George Baker	5-11	175	Fr.
SS	Jerrell Young	6-2	205	So.
	Jon Lejiste	6-0	190	Fr.
FS	**Nate Allen***	**6-2**	**205**	**Sr.**
	Dexter Baldwin	6-2	213	Sr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Maikon Bonani***	**5-9**	**174**	**So.**
P	**Delbert Alvarado***	**6-0**	**209**	**Sr.**

*** Returning Starters in Bold**

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	WOFFORD
Sept. 12	at Western Kentucky
Sept. 19	CHARLESTON SOUTHERN
Sept. 26	at Florida State
Oct. 3	at Syracuse
Oct. 15	CINCINNATI
Oct. 24	at Pittsburgh
Oct. 30	WEST VIRGINIA
Nov. 12	at Rutgers
Nov. 21	LOUISVILLE
Nov. 28	MIAMI
Dec. 5	at Connecticut

2008 Results

(8-5, 2-5)

W	TENNESSEE-MARTIN	56-7
W	at UCF (OT)	31-24
W	KANSAS	37-34
W	at Florida International	17-9
W	at NC State	41-10
L	PITTSBURGH	21-26
W	SYRACUSE	45-13
L	at Louisville	20-24
L	at Cincinnati	10-24
L	RUTGERS	16-49
W	CONNECTICUT	17-13
L	at West Virginia	7-13
	St. Petersburg Bowl	
W	vs. Memphis	41-14

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.6	45
Rushing	165.4	44
Passing	239.6	41
Total	405.0	32
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	20.0	24
Rushing	95.2	10
Passing	192.4	37
Total	287.6	10
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 8	- 0.62	97

SYRACUSE ORANGE

NATIONAL RANK 85

Big East rank: 8 | Record: 8-9 | Big East record: 1-6 (1-7th) | Stadium: Carrier Dome (49,262)

Orange in A Box

COACH: Doug Marrone – At Syracuse and overall: 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Rob Spence
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Scott Shafer
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2004, co-champs
LAST BOWL: 2004, Champs Sports
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 6 offense, 7 defense, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: DT Arthur Jones, WR Mike Williams, RB Delone Carter, DB Mike Holmes, C Jim McKenzie, KR/SS Max Suter, P Rob Long, LB Derrell Smith
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Syracuse, for the first time in recent memory, has legitimate Big East talent at the offensive skill positions. QB Cameron Dantley should improve with experience, and having Carter and Williams back is a major boost. The defensive line has a chance to be a disruptive group.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Does anyone know if Marrone can coach? In 17 years at the college and pro level, the former Syracuse offensive lineman has never been a head coach. This roster is still thin on talent and especially fragile if injuries hit – with eight players quitting in the spring.

OFFENSE

Expect vast improvement in the Orange's offense for two very good reasons: The return to health and good standing of running back Delone Carter and wide receiver Mike Williams.

Carter rushed for 713 yards in 2006 before missing all of 2007 with a dislocated hip. A hamstring injury limited him to four games last year. Williams had 837 receiving yards and 11 touchdowns as a sophomore in 2007 before sitting out last season.

Having those two weapons, as well as a fairly experienced offensive line, should be a welcome relief to quarterback Cameron Dantley. With few playmakers to work with last fall, Dantley passed for just 1,298 yards.

Now he has Williams and Carter to call on, as well as a deeper receiving group and a proven tight end in Mike Owen, who caught 19 passes a year ago.

Returning to the wideout positions are Donte Davis, who had a team-leading 29 catches in 2008, Marcus Sales (14 receptions) and Lavar Lobdell (13 receptions).

Carter, if he can regain his freshman form, will offset the loss of 1,164-yard rusher Curtis Brinkley.

Explosive sophomore tailback Antwon Bailey, who averaged 6.7 yards on 33 carries, will have an expanded role.

Carter and Williams will provide a major boost to an offense that was the Big East's worst — and lowest scoring one — last year.

DEFENSE

Doug Marrone's rebuilding job really starts on this side of the line with a unit that was last in the Big East in 2008 in points allowed (32.7), rushing defense (189.4 yards allowed per game) and total defense (414.5 yards allowed).

The defensive line has the chance to be a good one. That's due in large part to standout nose tackle Arthur Jones, whose career total of 31.5 tackles for loss (13 last season) rank sixth all-time at Syracuse. Jared Kimmel's emergence at end could take some of the pressure off Jones as well.

The linebackers aren't big, but they are active. Returning starters Derrell Smith and Mike Mele finished second and third, respectively, on the team in tackles last year as sophomores. Smith should be an even bigger factor this season after switching from the outside to the middle.

The secondary should be solid.

Cornerback Kevyn Scott showed enough promise as a redshirt freshman that standout Mike Holmes was moved from corner to free safety. Holmes should flourish in his new position after having two interceptions, a forced fumble and four fumble recoveries last year. He also averaged 23 yards on kickoff returns. Max Suter, who also excels on kick returns, mans the other safety spot.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Practice makes perfect, right? Any wonder then that Rob Long was one of the nation's top 15 punters with a 43.9-yard average? That ranks fourth in school history.

Syracuse will turn to redshirt freshman Austin Wallis to replace the reliable Patrick Shadle as the placekicker. Mike Holmes and Max Suter, meanwhile, give the Orange a dangerous tandem on kickoff returns.

OVERVIEW

After losing nine games by an average of 14.6 points last year, Syracuse should be more competitive. But this still doesn't have the look of a .500 team yet. Having eight home games will help, though opening with three consecutive Big Ten teams — Minnesota, Penn State and Northwestern — is odd.

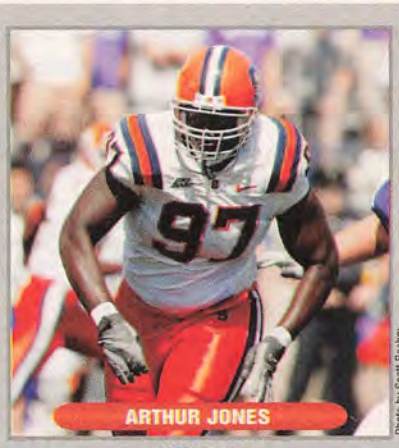


Photo by Scott Boehm

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Cameron Dantley***	**6-1**	**218**	**Sr.**
	Ryan Nassib	6-3	215	Fr.
RB	Delone Carter	5-10	214	Jr.
	Antwon Bailey	5-8	196	So.
FB	Carl Cutler	6-1	234	Fr.
	Daniel Collier	6-0	240	Sr.
WR	**Mike Williams***	**6-2**	**204**	**Jr.**
	Marcus Sales	6-0	184	So.
WR	**Donte Davis***	**6-0**	**173**	**Jr.**
	Da'Mon Merkerson	6-1	182	Jr.
TE	**Mike Owen***	**6-4**	**251**	**Sr.**
	Darnell Pratt	6-4	220	So.
LT	**Tucker Baumbach***	**6-5**	**307**	**Jr.**
	Nick Speller	6-5	307	Fr.
LG	Ryan Bartholomew	6-3	290	Jr.
	Adam Rosner	6-6	303	Jr.
C	**Jim McKenzie***	**6-4**	**286**	**Jr.**
	Dalton Phillips	6-3	278	Sr.
RG	Ian Allport	6-4	300	Fr.
	Nick Lepak	6-4	318	So.
RT	Jonathan Meldrum	6-5	303	Jr.
	Josh White	6-5	280	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Jared Kimmel***	**6-6**	**259**	**Jr.**
	Zary Stewart	6-4	229	So.
NT	**Arthur Jones***	**6-4**	**291**	**Sr.**
	Bud Tribbey	6-1	282	Jr.
DT	Andrew Lewis	6-3	282	Jr.
	Anthony Perkins	6-4	272	Jr.
DE	Mikhail Marinovich	6-4	232	So.
	Chandler Jones	6-5	238	Fr.
LB	**Derrell Smith***	**6-1**	**224**	**Jr.**
	Chad Battles	6-3	224	So.
LB	**Mike Mele***	**6-0**	**218**	**Jr.**
	Mike Stenclik	6-0	229	Sr.
LB	Parker Cantey	6-3	218	Jr.
	Ryan Gillum	5-11	220	So.
CB	**Kevyn Scott***	**5-11**	**197**	**So.**
	Grant Mayes	5-10	180	So.
CB	Nico Scott	5-10	180	Jr.
	Nick Chestnut	5-11	184	Sr.
SS	**Max Suter***	**5-11**	**190**	**Jr.**
	Randy McKinnon	5-10	198	Jr.
FS	**Mike Holmes***	**5-11**	**185**	**Jr.**
	Dorian Graham	5-11	185	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Austin Wallis	5-10	185	Fr.
P	**Rob Long***	**6-4**	**175**	**Jr.**

*** Returning Starters in Bold**

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	MINNESOTA
Sept. 12	at Penn State
Sept. 19	NORTHWESTERN
Sept. 26	MAINE
Oct. 3	SOUTH FLORIDA
Oct. 10	WEST VIRGINIA
Oct. 24	AKRON
Oct. 31	CINCINNATI
Nov. 7	at Pittsburgh
Nov. 14	at Louisville
Nov. 21	RUTGERS
Nov. 28	at Connecticut

2008 Results

	(3-9, 1-6)	
L	at Northwestern	10-30
L	AKRON	28-42
L	PENN STATE	13-55
W	NORTHEASTERN	30-21
L	PITTSBURGH	24-34
L	at West Virginia	6-17
L	at South Florida	13-45
W	LOUISVILLE	28-21
L	at Rutgers	17-35
L	CONNECTICUT	14-39
W	at Notre Dame	24-23
L	at Cincinnati	10-30

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	18.1	108
Rushing	148.7	55
Passing	121.5	113
Total	270.2	114
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	32.7	101
Rushing	189.4	101
Passing	225.1	83
Total	414.5	101
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 1	- 0.08	69

Big Three Vie For Title; Other Six Seek a Bowl Bid

The Mountain West's Big Three — Utah, TCU and BYU — are non-BCS schools in name only.

Everyone else, while capable of an upset over a foe from an automatic qualifying BCS conference, is trying to keep up.

Utah, the only unbeaten team in the country in 2008, permanently wiped those "non-BCS" smirks off the Alabama Crimson Tide in a tour de force Sugar Bowl.

Utah is the only team to go undefeated twice since the creation of the BCS system. The Utes' No. 2 ranking without a shot at the national championship game emboldened MWC commissioner Craig Thompson to lobby Congress for a change.

He presented a proposal to the BCS structure to replace the computer rankings with an NCAA basketball committee-type selection process. As he expected, he was politely voted down.

"I think we did a lot of good opening up discussion and taking a hard look at the way things are structured," said Utah's Kyle Whittingham, who won National Coach of the Year honors.

"We certainly got everyone's attention, even Congress, and I'm not a political guy."

But after Utah, TCU and BYU finished Nos. 2, 7, and 25 in the Associated Press poll (and 4, 7, 21 according to the coaches), the rest of the league has to wonder what it will take to break up the grip at the top.

"We have a long way to close the gap on the elite teams in Mountain West," said Colorado State second-year coach Steve Fairchild.

UNLV's Mike Sanford is the only coach on the hot seat this fall. The five other coaches not among the top three are still on their honeymoons. "The whole deal is to beat those three," said Sanford. "It's obvious to everyone it's a journey."

No one expects a shakeup in the status quo. TCU and BYU have veteran quarterbacks. Utah has young talent waiting in the wings.

Even though TCU sent five players to the NFL, coach Gary Patterson still has a deep roster that appears ready to take another step up, not back.

The Horned Frogs had the top defense in the country last season, and it has been traditionally terrific under Patterson. So when he has to reload athletes on that side of the ball to play with superstar defensive end Jerry Hughes, confidence is very high in Fort Worth.

Quarterback Andy Dalton takes good care of the ball, and the Frogs are always sure to run the ball ruggedly to go with their defense.

BYU coach Bronco Mendenhall now concedes the worst thing that could have happened to his team last season was to experience the September high of destroying UCLA, 59-0. That certified the Cougars as the nation's BCS buster, although Mendenhall said, "Our coaches and players knew we had a lot of work to do."

With quarterback Max Hall and running back Harvey Unga, BYU has one of the most imposing backfield combos in the country, and the Cougars have a schedule that could gain some national exposure.

With the "Big Three" expected to run away from the rest of the pack again, it's important to note that the Mountain West has four bowl contracts, and four of the other six teams would seem to have a shot at that spot.

Unless, that is, one of the Big Three make a Utah-like run and gets to a BCS game, opening up another postseason slot for the MWC.

— Natalie Meisler

Mountain West Picks

	GOOD NEWS	BAD NEWS	OUR CALL
1. TCU	Key offensive cogs return, and Utah has to visit Fort Worth this time.	No bye weeks to heal up in midseason. Only five starters return on the defense.	Will run up BCS standings if Gary Patterson fills holes at LB and keeps QB Andy Dalton healthy.
2. Utah	Sugar Bowl star LB Stevenson Sylvester returns to lead the defense.	QB Brian Johnson, K/P Louie Sakoda are gone. Must play TCU and BYU on the road.	It's too much to ask to go unbeaten again, but Utes cruise to a ninth straight bowl game.
3. BYU	Most of the offensive skill players return. Both Utah and TCU travel to Provo.	Cougars open against Oklahoma in Arlington, Texas.	Will pull off an upset or two, and are capable of outscoring most everyone else.
4. Air Force	Offense can be built around QB Tim Jefferson, the MWC Freshman of the Year in 2008.	Any time the Falcons replace their placekicker, it can be an adventure.	Early October meeting vs. Navy will help determine if it's a successful season or not.
5. UNLV	Junior Omar Clayton is a winning QB, and Ryan Wolfe is still around to catch his passes.	No running threat to replace wrecking ball Frank Summers. Secondary is a work in progress.	Heat is on Mike Sanford to turn this around, and there are reasons to believe this is the year.
6. San Diego St.	Sophomore QB Ryan Lindley was a breakthrough in an otherwise dismal season.	This is the only school not to attend a bowl in the history of the MWC.	Lindley gives Aztecs an edge over teams looking for answers at quarterback.
7. Colorado St.	A veteran O-line and receiving corps will make up for inexperience at QB and RB.	Top defensive player, LB Ricky Brewer, out for the season on a "team rules" suspension.	There isn't enough talent to separate from the other five outside the Big Three.
8. Wyoming	Cowboys made a great hire in Dave Christensen (Missouri offensive coordinator).	Christensen couldn't bring quarterback Chase Daniel with him.	At least Christensen has the Big 12 scouting report when Texas visits Laramie.
9. New Mexico	New coach Mike Locksley brings in a new enthusiasm and new offense.	Gone are Rocky Long and his trademark defense, which drove MWC opponents mad.	It will be a good first season for learning before the Lobos can start to climb.

Lindy's 2009 ALL-MWC Team

OFFENSE - First Team

QB	Max Hall	Sr.	BYU
RB	Matt Asiata	Sr.	Utah
RB	Harvey Unga	Jr.	BYU
WR	Ryan Wolfe	Sr.	UNLV
WR	Rashaun Greer	Sr.	Colorado State
TE	Dennis Pitta	Sr.	BYU
C	Erik Cook	Sr.	New Mexico
OL	Shelley Smith	Sr.	Colorado State
OL	Zane Beadles	Sr.	Utah
OL	Marshall Newhouse	Sr.	TCU
OL	Nick Charles	Sr.	Air Force
AP	David Reed	Sr.	Utah
K	Ross Evans	So.	TCU

DEFENSE - First Team

DL	Jan Jorgensen	Sr.	BYU
DL	John Fletcher	Sr.	Wyoming
DL	Koa Misi	Sr.	Utah
DL	Jerry Hughes	Sr.	TCU
LB	Stevenson Sylvester	Sr.	Utah
LB	Jason Beauchamp	Sr.	UNLV
LB	Ken Lamendola	Jr.	Air Force
DB	Rafael Priest	Sr.	TCU
DB	Robert Johnson	Sr.	Utah
DB	Nick Sanders	Sr.	TCU
DB	Chris Thomas	Sr.	Air Force
P	Anson Kelton	So.	TCU

OFFENSE - Second Team

QB	Andy Dalton	Jr.	TCU
RB	Asher Clark	So.	Air Force
RB	Joseph Turner	Sr.	TCU
WR	Jimmy Young	Jr.	TCU
WR	Vincent Brown	Jr.	San Diego State
TE	Jesson Salyards	Sr.	Wyoming
C	Tim Walter	Sr.	Colorado State
OL	Joshua Taufalele	Sr.	New Mexico
OL	Matt Murphy	Jr.	UNLV
OL	Zane Taylor	Jr.	Utah
OL	Matt Reynolds	So.	BYU
AP	Dion Morton	Sr.	Colorado State
K	James Aho	So.	New Mexico

DEFENSE - Second Team

DL	Brett Denney	Sr.	BYU
DL	Mitch Unrein	Sr.	Wyoming
DL	Kenape Eliapo	Sr.	Utah
DL	Ben Garland	Sr.	Air Force
LB	Mychal Sisson	So.	Colorado State
LB	Matt Bauman	Sr.	BYU
LB	Daryl Washington	Sr.	TCU
DB	Tejay Johnson	Jr.	TCU
DB	Klint Kubiak	Sr.	Colorado State
DB	Marcell Gipson	Jr.	Wyoming
DB	Ian Clark	Sr.	New Mexico
P	Adam Miller	Sr.	New Mexico

THE BIG ONES

Sept. 5	BYU vs. Oklahoma (Arlington, TX)
Sept. 5	Colorado State at Colorado
Sept. 12	Air Force at Minnesota
Sept. 12	Texas at Wyoming
Sept. 12	TCU at Virginia
Sept. 19	Florida State at BYU
Sept. 19	Utah at Oregon
Sept. 19	Hawaii at UNLV
Sept. 26	Louisville at Utah
Sept. 26	TCU at Clemson
Oct. 24	TCU at BYU
Oct. 24	Air Force at Utah
Oct. 31	New Mexico at San Diego State
Nov. 14	Utah at TCU
Nov. 28	Utah at BYU

Bowl Connections

Champion
Las Vegas vs. Pac-10 #4/5

MWC #2
Poinsettia Bowl vs. Pac-10

MWC #3
Armed Forces vs. C-USA

MWC #4
New Mexico vs. WAC #3

BCS Note: The MWC champion receives an automatic bid to a BCS bowl (Rose, Fiesta, Orange, or Sugar) by finishing in the Top 12 of the final regular-season BCS ratings; or by finishing in the Top 16 and ahead of one of the BCS conference champs.

TOP 10 NFL TALENT

1. Jerry Hughes	DE	Sr.	TCU	Former high-school RB probably a LB at next level.
2. Jan Jorgensen	DE	Sr.	BYU	The all-time Mountain West Conference sack leader.
3. Dennis Pitta	TE	Sr.	BYU	BYU's next great tight end in the NFL.
4. Zane Beadles	OT	Sr.	Utah	Reminds folks in Salt Lake City of Jordan Gross.
5. Stevenson Sylvester	LB	Sr.	Utah	Made a memorable national impact in Sugar Bowl.
6. Daryl Washington	LB	Sr.	TCU	One of top athletes on one of nation's best defenses.
7. Brett Denney	DE	Sr.	BYU	Two older brothers have played in NFL.
8. Rashaun Greer	WR	Sr.	CSU	Good size and productive in a variety of ways.
9. Max Hall	QB	Sr.	BYU	Size is an issue, but three-year starter merits a look.
10. Rafael Priest	CB	Sr.	TCU	Averages nearly 10 pass breakups a season.

Most Valuable Player	Offensive Player of the Year	Defensive Player of the Year	Newcomer of the Year
Jerry Hughes DE, TCU	Max Hall QB, BYU	Stevenson Sylvester LB, Utah	Lata Heimuli DT, Utah

HONOR ROLL

Most Accurate Passer	Max Hall	BYU
Strongest Arm	Ryan Lindley	San Diego State
Best Scrambler	Andy Dalton	TCU
Coolest in the Clutch	Tim Jefferson	Air Force
Toughest to Bring Down	Harvey Unga, RB	BYU
Best Hands	Dennis Pitta, TE	BYU
Most Dangerous Deep Threat	Ryan Wolfe, WR	UNLV
Best Pass Blocker	Zane Beadles, OT	Utah
Best Run Blocker	Nick Charles, OG	Air Force
Best Pass Rusher	Jerry Hughes, DE	TCU
Best Cover Corner	Rafael Priest	TCU
Special Teams Demon	Aiona Key	Utah

TCU HORNED FROGS

NATIONAL RANK 14

MWC rank: T1 | Record: 11-2 | MWC record: 7-1 (2nd) | Stadium: Amon G. Carter Stadium (44,358)

Horned Frogs in A Box

COACH: Gary Patterson — At TCU and overall: 73-27, 8 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Jarrett Anderson, Justin Fuente
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dick Bumpas
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2005
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2004
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 6 offense, 5 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Andy Dalton, RB Ryan Christian, WR Jimmy Young, DE Jerry Hughes, S Tejay Johnson, CB Rafael Priest, CB Nick Sanders
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: With three starters back up front and a returning dual-threat quarterback, the Horned Frogs appear to be loaded again on offense. Defensively, Hughes and a pair of three-year starters at corner will cause problems for opponents' aerial attacks.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The loss of two All-Mountain West Conference performers at linebacker raises concerns. Finding capable run-stoppers is key to keeping the defense off the field. The Frogs also must show they can compete at the highest level when the spotlight shines the brightest.

OFFENSE

The Frogs return a strong nucleus from an offense that set single-season school records last year for points scored (437) and touchdowns (56).

Andy Dalton will be under center again after winning 19 games in the past two seasons. He is already second in school history for career completions (404) and passing yards (4,701). Dalton is also adept at running the ball, scoring eight touchdowns on the ground a year ago.

Dalton has plenty of weapons at his disposal, with top rusher Joseph Turner and leading pass-catcher Jimmy Young returning. They combined for 16 touchdowns in 2008.

In fact, TCU returns all but one wide receiver from last year's group, which combined to catch 217 balls for more than 2,600 yards and 14 touchdowns.

Versatile running back Ryan Christian was second on the team with 30 catches and fourth in rushing with 386 yards.

The line is solid on the edges with returning All-Mountain West tackles Marshall Newhouse and Marcus Cannon.

Newhouse has started every game at left tackle for two seasons and is the cousin of former NFL fullback Robert Newhouse. The 6-5, 350-pound Cannon was dominant in the Frogs' 17-16 win over Boise State in the Poinsettia Bowl and made 11 starts a year ago.

DEFENSE

Led by *Lindy's* preseason All-American defensive end Jerry Hughes, TCU returns five starters and several key reserves from last year's top-ranked defense in the nation. TCU has led the country in defense three times in the past nine seasons.

Hughes led the nation with 15 sacks and also forced six fumbles.

"He'll be a lot more of a vocal leader on and off the field," coach Gary Patterson said. "To make up for the loss of the emotional leaders that we lost off last year's football team, it's going to be very important that he does that."

Helping Hughes will be returning All-MWC cornerbacks Rafael Priest and Nick Sanders, standout linebacker Daryl Washington and safety Tejay Johnson.

Arguably the best all-around athlete on the team, Washington's 63-tackle performance last year was lost in the All-MWC seasons of teammates Jason Phillips and Robert Henson — both NFL draftees. Washington is equally effective as a run-stopper or in pass coverage — critical in the Mountain West.

Priest and Sanders have started every game at corner in the past three seasons.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Punter Anson Kelton earned All-MWC honors a year ago for his amazing accuracy. In addition to averaging 41.3 yards per kick, Kelton pinned opponents inside the 20-yard line 30 times in 54 tries.

TCU also returns kicker Ross Evans, who was the lone freshman to be a semifinalist for the Lou Groza Award. He hit 16 of 20 field goals and booted 49 PATs, one shy of the school record.

The Frogs' perennial potent special teams will also get a boost from shifty Jeremy Kerley, who gave TCU its fourth consecutive first-team all-conference return specialist. He ranked 13th nationally in punt returns as a sophomore.

OVERVIEW

Only a loss at BCS-buster Utah last year kept the Frogs from their own elusive BCS prize. To ratchet up the strength of schedule, TCU travels to the East Coast for September showdowns against Virginia and Clemson. If the Frogs survive a trip to MWC rival BYU in October, they get Utah at home in what could shape up as the conference title game on Nov. 14.

JERRY HUGHES

Photo by Christopher Hanewinckel-US PRESSWIRE

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Andy Dalton***	**6-3**	**215**	**Jr.**
	Yogi Gallegos	6-1	192	Fr.
TB	Ryan Christian	5-11	180	Sr.
	Joseph Turner	6-1	225	Sr.
WR	Antoine Hicks	6-2	193	So.
	Curtis Clay	6-0	180	Jr.
WR	**Jimmy Young***	**6-1**	**200**	**Jr.**
	Jonathan Jones	6-4	197	So.
WR	**Bart Johnson***	**6-1**	**190**	**Jr.**
	Tyler Luttrell	6-1	195	Jr.
TE	Evan Frosch	6-4	260	Jr.
	Logan Brock	6-3	253	So.
LT	**Marshall Newhouse***	**6-3**	**317**	**Sr.**
	Nic Richmond	6-8	322	Sr.
LG	**Kyle Dooley***	**6-3**	**310**	**So.**
	Blaize Foltz	6-4	310	Fr.
C	Jake Kirkpatrick	6-3	305	Jr.
	Spencer Thompson	6-4	270	So.
RG	Josh Vernon	6-2	295	Jr.
	Zach Roth	6-5	310	Jr.
RT	**Marcus Cannon***	**6-5**	**350**	**Jr.**
	Jeff Olson	6-4	282	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Jerry Hughes***	**6-3**	**257**	**Sr.**
	Clarence Leatch	6-4	245	Jr.
DT	Kelly Griffin	6-1	295	Jr.
	Cory Grant	6-2	303	Jr.
DT	Wayne Daniels	6-2	250	Jr.
	Jeremy Coleman	6-2	285	Fr.
DE	Ross Forrest	6-4	242	So.
	Braylon Broughton	6-6	248	So.
LB	**Daryl Washington***	**6-3**	**228**	**Sr.**
	Kris Gardner	6-2	235	So.
LB	Tank Carder	6-2	232	So.
	Tanner Brock	6-3	217	Fr.
CB	**Nick Sanders***	**5-10**	**174**	**Sr.**
	Jason Teague	6-2	185	Jr.
CB	**Rafael Priest***	**5-10**	**181**	**Sr.**
	Greg McCoy	5-10	181	So.
WS	Corderra Hunter	6-2	220	Sr.
	Marcus Jackson	6-1	216	Sr.
SS	Sir Demarco Bledsoe	6-2	195	So.
	Colin Jones	6-0	205	Jr.
FS	**Tejay Johnson***	**6-1**	**212**	**Jr.**
	Johnny Fobbs	6-1	203	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Ross Evans***	**5-11**	**180**	**So.**
P	**Anson Kelton***	**6-4**	**260**	**So.**

*** Returning Starters in Bold**

2009 Schedule

Sept. 12	at Virginia
Sept. 19	TEXAS STATE
Sept. 26	at Clemson
Oct. 3	SMU
Oct. 10	at Air Force
Oct. 17	COLORADO STATE
Oct. 24	at BYU
Oct. 31	UNLV
Nov. 7	at San Diego State
Nov. 14	UTAH
Nov. 21	at Wyoming
Nov. 28	NEW MEXICO

2008 Results

	(11-2, 7-1)	
W	at New Mexico	26-3
W	STEPHEN F. AUSTIN	67-7
W	STANFORD	31-14
W	at SMU	48-7
L	at Oklahoma	10-35
W	SAN DIEGO STATE	41-7
W	at Colorado State	13-7
W	BYU	32-7
W	Wyoming	54-7
W	at UNLV	44-14
L	at Utah	10-13
W	AIR FORCE	44-10
	Poinsettia Bowl	
W	vs. Boise State	17-16

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	33.6	21
Rushing	220.2	12
Passing	201.1	72
Total	421.3	24
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	11.3	2
Rushing	47.1	1
Passing	170.7	11
Total	217.8	1
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 13	+ 1.00	10

THE MTN.'s

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UTAH UTES

NATIONAL RANK 23

MWC rank: 2 | Record: 13-0 | MWC Record: 8-0 (1st) | Stadium: Rice-Eccles Stadium (45,017)

Utes in A Box

COACH: Kyle Whittingham — At Utah and overall: 37-14, 4 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dave Schramm
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kalani Sitake
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2008
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2002
RETURNING STARTERS: 11; 4 offense, 7 defense
PLAYERS TO WATCH: WR David Reed, WR Aiona Key, RB Matt Asiata, DE Koa Misi, LB Stevenson Sylvester, S Robert Johnson
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Utah is an established program that can overcome graduation/early draft entry losses. The offensive line and running game will support the offense early, while the defense will dominate as soon as Utah's cornerbacks develop.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The talent is there, but the Utes are short on quarterback experience. Utah wears a huge target in the MWC, and has to play at Oregon, TCU and BYU. Both coordinators are new.

OFFENSE

A main focus during spring practice was on the quarterback position as Utah seeks a replacement for Brian Johnson, who earned MWC Offensive Player of the Year honors and helped the Utes to an undefeated season.

He didn't do it alone at the position, as the Utes used Corbin Louks in running situations last season. With sprinter's speed, he averaged 8.1 yards on 27 carries and scored three times.

Louks is back, but passing is still part of the Utes spread offense. Junior college transfer Terrance Cain came in and battled as expected in the spring. The real surprise was freshman Jordan Wynn.

"When he got to campus in January, he weighed 153 pounds," said coach Kyle Whittingham.

A redshirt is still possible, but Wynn, who originally committed to Colorado, packed on 20 pounds by the end of spring ball.

Whittingham called last season's successful Johnson-Louks combo a "change-up" and isn't opposed to a similar setup this season, although he doesn't want a full-blown two-quarterback system.

Meanwhile, redshirt freshman DeVonte Christopher, who went into spring as a candidate at quarterback, moved to wide receiver and might take snaps in the Wildcat formation.

Senior Matt Asiata is a power rusher who ran for 707 yards last season despite splitting carries with ex-Ute Darrell Mack. He's ahead of junior Eddie Wide and redshirt freshman Sausan Shakerin, a former Class 5A high school MVP in Utah.

The top three receivers are gone, but Jereme Brooks, David Reed and Aiona Key are back. Key was one of the most touted recruits in the league last season but by the time his academics were in order, the receiver rotation was set without him.

Senior left tackle Zane Beadles anchors a line with just enough experience to be an early force. The biggest switch in the spring came when Zane Taylor, who started every game at center last season, was moved to right guard.

DEFENSE

If defensive end Paul Kruger hadn't entered the draft early, Utah would have one of the most dominant defensive lines in the West, if not the country. Kruger was a second-round draft pick, tops in the MWC. Derrick Shelby and Nai Fotu emerged from the spring even at his old position.

Koa Misi at right end was overshadowed by Kruger last season, but should come into his own this year.

Two newcomers who could make a difference inside are junior college transfer James Aiono and freshman Latu Heimuli.

The hub of the defense is rover linebacker Stevenson Sylvester, who dominated Alabama in the Sugar Bowl with seven tackles, three sacks and a fumble recovery.

Safeties Robert Johnson and Joe Dale return, but there is some inexperience at corner.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker/punter Louie Sakoda, a four-year mainstay, could be missed more than Johnson. Ben Vroman takes over the placekicking duties. He has a strong leg, but accuracy and consistency on placements are critical.

The Utes, always solid in the return department, look for receiver David Reed to challenge as one of the league's best.

OVERVIEW

Utah has a growing tradition, is one of the few MWC programs without financial woes, and has impressive recruiting classes and stability at the top. It adds up to a dominant program, which is what we saw last season. This might not be a BCS year, but another conference title is possible and another bowl is all but a certainty.

KOA MISI

Photo by Kevin C. Cox/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Corbin Louks	6-0	190	Jr.
	Terrance Cain	5-11	185	Jr.
RB	Matt Asiata	5-11	230	Sr.
	Eddie Wide	5-10	195	Jr.
WR	Aiona Key	6-4	195	Sr.
	DeVonte Christopher	6-1	190	Fr.
WR	David Reed	6-0	190	Sr.
	Shaky Smithson	5-11	210	Jr.
WR	Jereme Brooks	5-7	170	Jr.
	Elijah Wesson	5-11	190	Sr.
TE	**Chris Jopprу***	**6-6**	**267**	**Sr.**
	Brad Clifford	6-4	250	Jr.
LT	**Zane Beadles***	**6-4**	**305**	**Sr.**
	Viliamu Nau	6-6	300	Sr.
LG	**Caleb Schlauderaff***	**6-4**	**300**	**Jr.**
	Walter Watts	6-2	296	Jr.
C	Tyler Williams	6-1	282	Sr.
	Tevita Stevens	6-1	280	Fr.
RG	**Zane Taylor***	**6-2**	**300**	**Jr.**
	Derek Tuimauga	6-4	304	Fr.
RT	Tony Bergstrom	6-6	300	So.
	Sam Brenner	6-3	291	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Koa Misi***	**6-3**	**256**	**Sr.**
	Junior Tui'one	6-4	274	Jr.
DT	Lei Talamaivao	6-2	280	So.
	James Aiono	6-3	273	Jr.
NT	Sealver Siliga	6-3	311	So.
	Kenape Eliapo*	**6-0**	**310**	**Sr.**
DE	Derrick Shelby	6-3	250	So.
	Nai Fotu*	**6-0**	**224**	**Jr.**
LB	Kepa Gaison	5-10	215	Sr.
	Chaz Walker	5-11	213	So.
LB	**Mike Wright***	**6-2**	**239**	**Sr.**
	Mo Neal	6-2	221	So.
LB	**Stevenson Sylvester***	**6-2**	**224**	**Sr.**
	J.J. Williams	6-0	225	So.
CB	R.J. Stanford	5-11	184	Sr.
	Kamaron Yancy	5-9	187	Jr.
CB	Brandon Burton	6-0	184	So.
	Conroy Black	6-0	176	Jr.
SS	**Joe Dale***	**5-11**	**200**	**Sr.**
	Justin Taplin-Ross	6-3	208	Jr.
FS	**Robert Johnson***	**6-2**	**195**	**Sr.**
	Reggie Topps	5-11	180	Fr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Ben Vroman	6-0	203	Sr.
P	Sean Sellwood	6-3	200	Fr.

*** Returning Starters in Bold**

2009 Schedule

Sept. 3	UTAH STATE
Sept. 12	at San Jose State
Sept. 19	at Oregon
Sept. 26	LOUISVILLE
Oct. 10	at Colorado State
Oct. 17	at UNLV
Oct. 24	AIR FORCE
Oct. 31	WYOMING
Nov. 7	NEW MEXICO
Nov. 14	at TCU
Nov. 21	SAN DIEGO STATE
Nov. 28	at BYU

2008 Results

	(13-0, 8-0)	
W	at Michigan	25-23
W	UNLV	42-21
W	at Utah State	58-10
W	at Air Force	30-23
W	WEBER STATE	37-21
W	OREGON STATE	31-28
W	at Wyoming	40-7
W	COLORADO STATE	49-16
W	at New Mexico	13-10
W	TCU	13-10
W	at San Diego State	63-14
W	BYU	48-24
	Sugar Bowl	
W	vs. Alabama	31-17

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	36.9	15
Rushing	156.4	51
Passing	244.4	35
Total	400.9	35
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	17.2	12
Rushing	99.1	11
Passing	190.0	33
Total	289.1	11
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 13	+ 1.00	10

BYU COUGARS

NATIONAL RANK 25

MWC rank: 3 | Record: 10-3 | MWC record: 6-2 (3rd) | Stadium: LaVell Edwards Stadium (64,045)

Cougars in A Box

COACH: Bronco Mendenhall — At BYU and overall: 38-13, 4 years
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 4 offense, 7 defense, kicker
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Robert Anae
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jaime Hill
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2007
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2004
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Max Hall, RB Harvey Unga, DE Jan Jorgensen, TE Dennis Pitta, LB Matt Bauman
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The passing game will again be prolific, with Hall and Pitta returning as seniors. Defenses know Hall is going to throw to Pitta, but they keep connecting. They have strong support in the running game.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: How BYU deals with the opener against Oklahoma — and a potential third straight loss, dating to last season — will go a long way in determining the course of the season. The Cougars have some work to do in the pass defense department.

OFFENSE

Even with his surreal five-interception, one-fumble buzzsaw at Utah, Max Hall still finished in the top 11 nationally in most passing categories. His 35 touchdown passes set a league record.

He's back for his senior season, projected as the best quarterback in the Mountain West, and the plan is to complement Hall with a healthy Harvey Unga in the backfield.

Nagging injuries followed a brilliant freshman campaign for Unga, yet he still produced a second 1,000-yard season. Unga won't have to be used as an every-down back because of ample depth at the position.

Hall's favorite target will be All-America tight end candidate Dennis Pitta, who caught 83 passes for 1,083 yards last season. A late-season injury coincided with the team's demise and deterred Pitta from coming out early. He will have a double-tight end partner in senior Andrew George.

The biggest offensive loss was wide receiver Austin Collie, who led the nation with 1,538 receiving yards and set the BYU career receiving record with a year of eligibility left. The ideal replacement for Collie, off to the NFL, is McKay Jacobson, who showed vast potential as a freshman in 2006 before leaving on his church mission.

While conventional wisdom is it takes a full season for returned missionaries to fully get their legs back, coach Bronco Mendenhall said Jacobson's situation compares favorably to when Collie returned from his mission.

That leaves only the line, which lost four starters, in need of significant rebuilding.

DEFENSE

With seven starters returning, including six members of the 3-4 front, high expectations await the defense. Defensive end Jan Jorgensen is the clear leader; he already holds the Mountain West sack record with 24.

He attracts plenty of double-teams, but opponents won't be able to find a weakness on a line that also returns Brett Denney at the other end and Russell Tialavea in the middle.

Linebacker Matt Bauman, who led the team in tackles with 108, will have to raise his game even more with the departure of David Nixon. If seniors Terrance Hooks and Vic So'oto come back from injuries, BYU will have uncommon depth in the linebacking corps.

Replacing both starting safeties becomes the top priority for the secondary, which is why cornerback Scott Johnson moved to safety. Incoming freshman Craig Bills, a local product ranked among the top safeties in the nation, could help immediately.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Placekicking duties remain with junior Mitch Payne, who was 10 of 14 on field goals and 54 of 56 on extra points. He held off a challenge from freshman Justin Sorensen, who has since left on a church mission.

The punting job will be decided in the fall as BYU tries to capably replace C. J. Santiago.

BYU ranked ninth nationally in kickoff returns last season thanks to Austin Collie, whose departure leaves O'Neill Chambers as the top return specialist.

OVERVIEW

BYU has a brutal September schedule — games against Oklahoma and Florida State — by far the toughest non-league agenda of any MWC team. If the Cougars can refocus after that, they will be in the hunt, as usual, for the MWC title. They just need to go somewhere other than a fifth straight Las Vegas Bowl.

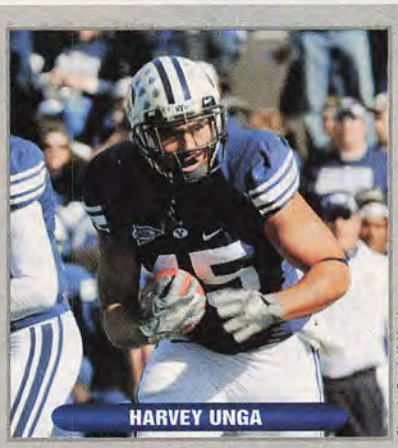

HARVEY UNGA

Photo by Dennis Hubbard

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Max Hall***	**6-1**	**201**	**Sr.**
	Brenden Gaskins	6-4	213	Sr.
HB	**Harvey Unga***	**6-0**	**239**	**Jr.**
	J.J DiLuigi	5-9	198	So.
FB	Bryan Kariya	6-0	212	So.
	Malosi Te'o	5-10	199	Fr.
WR	Luke Ashworth	6-2	201	Jr.
	McKay Jacobson	5-11	192	So.
WR	O'Neill Chambers	6-2	209	So.
	Tyler Kozlowski	5-9	188	Jr.
TE	**Dennis Pitta***	**6-5**	**248**	**Sr.**
	Andrew George	6-5	249	Sr.
LT	**Matt Reynolds***	**6-6**	**320**	**So.**
	Braden Hansen	6-6	286	Fr.
LG	Jason Speredon	6-5	305	Jr.
	Braden Hanson	6-6	286	Fr.
C	R.J. Willing	6-5	310	Sr.
	Marco Thorson	6-3	310	So.
RG	Terence Brown	6-3	351	So.
	Jesse Taufi	6-4	302	Jr.
RT	Nick Alleto	6-6	318	Jr.
	Jesse Taufi	6-4	302	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Brett Denney***	**6-4**	**265**	**Sr.**
	Matt Putnam	6-6	267	So.
NT	**Russell Tialavea***	**6-3**	**286**	**Sr.**
	Rick Wolfley	6-3	352	Jr.
DE	**Jan Jorgensen***	**6-3**	**259**	**Sr.**
	Bernard Afutiti	6-1	262	Jr.
LB	Jordan Pendleton	6-2	228	So.
	Grant Nelson	6-3	226	Jr.
LB	**Matt Bauman***	**6-1**	**229**	**Sr.**
	Dan Van Sweden	6-2	232	Sr.
LB	**Coleby Clawson***	**6-3**	**234**	**Sr.**
	Vic So'oto	6-3	253	Sr.
LB	**Shawn Doman***	**6-2**	**232**	**Sr.**
	Terrance Hooks	6-1	227	Sr.
CB	Garett Nicholson	5-9	181	Fr.
	Landon Jaussi	6-5	210	Jr.
CB	Brandon Bradley	6-0	200	Jr.
	Steven Thomas	5-11	176	So.
SS	Andrew Rich	6-3	215	Jr.
	Shiloah Te'o	5-10	206	So.
FS	**Scott Johnson***	**5-11**	**188**	**Sr.**
	Travis Uale	6-2	195	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Mitch Payne***	**6-2**	**210**	**Jr.**
P	Tyler Holt	5-9	177	So.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	vs. Oklahoma (Arlington, TX)
Sept. 12	at Tulane
Sept. 19	FLORIDA STATE
Sept. 26	COLORADO STATE
Oct. 2	UTAH STATE
Oct. 10	at UNLV
Oct. 17	at San Diego State
Oct. 24	TCU
Nov. 7	at Wyoming
Nov. 14	at New Mexico
Nov. 21	AIR FORCE
Nov. 28	UTAH

2008 Results

	(10-3, 6-2)	
W	NORTHERN IOWA	41-17
W	at Washington	28-27
W	UCLA	59-0
W	WYOMING	44-0
W	at Utah State	34-14
W	NEW MEXICO	21-3
L	at TCU	7-32
W	UNLV	42-35
W	at Colorado State	45-42
W	SAN DIEGO STATE	41-12
W	at Air Force	38-24
L	at Utah	24-48
	Las Vegas Bowl	
L	vs. Arizona	21-31

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	34.2	20
Rushing	134.4	70
Passing	310.4	6
Total	444.8	16
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	21.9	39
Rushing	140.3	60
Passing	215.6	74
Total	355.9	59
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 2	+ 0.15	49

AIR FORCE FALCONS

NATIONAL RANK 77

MWC rank: 4 | Record: 8-5 | MWC record: 5-3 (4th) | Stadium: Falcon Stadium (46,692)

Falcons in A Box

COACH: Troy Calhoun — At Air Force and overall: 17-9, 2 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Clay Hendrix, Blane Morgan
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tim DeRuyter
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1985
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2006
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 6 offense, 7 defense
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Tim Jefferson, OG Nick Charles, QB/TB Asher Clark, LB Ken Lamendola, S Chris Thomas
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: There are more standouts than usual on defense, led by Lamendola and Thomas. Air Force has led the Mountain West in rushing in each year of the league's existence … and the Falcons figure to do so again.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Falcons have a tough early Big Ten road trip to Minnesota, and then open MWC play Sept. 19 at New Mexico. Later in the conference season, Air Force will play at Utah and BYU.

OFFENSE

Tim Jefferson emerged as the starting quarterback midway through last season, when back-to-back road trips to two of the lesser-competitive MWC teams — San Diego State and UNLV — permitted a break-in period.

Through eight starts, Jefferson hit 44 of 80 passes for 655 yards and five touchdowns. Maybe that's merely two games' worth of stats for BYU's Max Hall, but they are very tangible, very large, passing numbers for an Air Force freshman.

Jefferson led the Falcons to a five-game winning streak, an appearance in the Armed Forces Bowl, and took home MWC Freshman of the Year honors.

None of that means he will take the first snap of the 2009 season, however.

Under orders from coach Troy Calhoun, Jefferson missed the bulk of spring to concentrate on academics. In Jefferson's absence, tailback Asher Clark — who was second on the team in rushing last season with 588 yards — was switched back to his original position of quarterback.

No competition ever developed, though, as Clark suffered a minor knee injury. Those two, plus Connor Dietz, could end up battling in fall camp. Clark could still wind up as the starting running back.

Up front, Air Force has a rare four-year starter on the line in left guard Nick Charles, who earned second team all-conference honors last season. The line, which should be a strength, also features senior Chris Campbell, another candidate for postseason honors.

DEFENSE

Junior middle linebacker Ken Lamendola might be one of the most athletic AFA linebackers in history. He ranked third in the Mountain West last season with 118 tackles.

He draws comparisons to Air Force alums and former NFL players Chris Gizzi and Anthony Schlegel (via Ohio State).

The line lost one of last season's best defenders in end Jake Paulson, who had 14.5 tackles for losses. Senior Ben Garland, who had 7.5 tackles for loss last season, takes over the leadership role.

The secondary appears to be the strength of the defense. Senior Chris Thomas will be going for his third 100-tackle season. He is the only senior in the group, but he has some good company.

Although cornerback Reggie Rembert missed spring ball for an undisclosed non-football issue, his return is expected. Calhoun hinted as much when he said: "He's going to graduate on time and make a great officer."

Sophomore cornerback Anthony Wright started 10 games as a freshman. Sophomore safety Jon Davis is the only projected starter in the secondary without much experience.

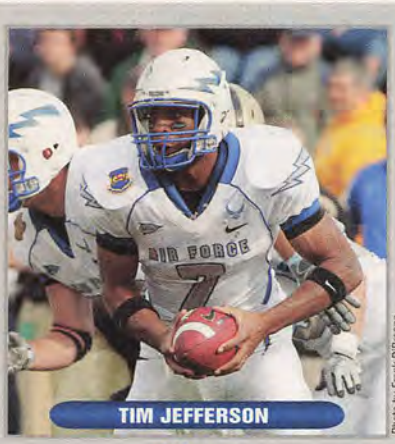
SPECIAL TEAMS

The biggest loss for the Falcons is two-year starting kicker Ryan Harrison, who also handled most of the punting duties. The kicking battle won't be decided until the fall. Brandon Geyer, who took over some of the punting duties last season, had an edge in that department.

OVERVIEW

The Falcons gave unbeaten Utah its biggest scare last season, forcing the Utes to score with a minute left. The program's 17 victories over the past two seasons represent Air Force's best back-to-back years since 1998-99, when the Falcons won 18 games.

Air Force is back in the bowl cycle, and Calhoun is beginning to see the results of his recruiting. At least until some of the league's new coaches raise their programs, the Falcons will stay in the top half of the MWC.



TIM JEFFERSON

Photo by Frank DiBrango

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Tim Jefferson***	**6-0**	**200**	**Jr.**
	Connor Dietz	6-0	185	So.
TB	**Asher Clark***	**5-8**	**185**	**So.**
	Savier Stephens	5-11	190	Jr.
FB	Jared Tew	6-0	210	Jr.
	Ryan Southworth	5-10	220	Jr.
WR	Kyle Halderman	5-11	175	Jr.
	Jonathan Warzeka	5-9	175	So.
WR	Kevin Fogler	6-5	205	Jr.
	Josh Cousin*	**6-0**	**200**	**Sr.**
TE	Sean Quintana	6-2	200	Sr.
	Chaz Demerath	6-2	195	Jr.
LT	Ryan Gonzales	6-3	255	Sr.
	A.J. Wallerstein	6-4	285	So
LG	**Nick Charles***	**6-4**	**285**	**Sr.**
	Jeffrey Benson	6-0	265	So.
C	Michael Hampton	6-2	260	Sr.
	Michael Hester	6-3	240	So.
RG	**Peter Lusk***	**6-3**	**270**	**Sr.**
	Ty Shonsheck	6-1	265	Jr.
RT	**Chris Campbell***	**6-3**	**270**	**Sr.**
	Chase Darden	6-3	265	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Myles Morales	6-3	250	Sr.
	Ryan Gardner	6-3	240	So.
DL	**Ben Garland***	**6-5**	**275**	**Sr.**
	Bradley Connor	6-2	265	Jr.
DE	Rick Ricketts	6-3	260	Jr.
	Wylie Wikstrom	6-2	235	Jr.
LB	Patrick Hennessey	6-2	215	Jr.
	Jordan Waiwaiole	6-3	210	So.
LB	**Justin Moore***	**5-11**	**225**	**Sr.**
	John Falgout	6-0	225	Sr.
LB	**Ken Lamendola***	**6-2**	**230**	**Jr.**
	Austin Demmel	6-1	200	So
LB	**Andre Morris***	**6-3**	**235**	**Jr.**
	Braylon Gurnell	6-2	195	Jr.
CB	**Anthony Wright***	**5-10**	**189**	**So.**
	P.J Adeji-Paul	6-0	190	So.
CB	**Reggie Rembert***	**5-7**	**175**	**Jr.**
	Elliott Battle	5-9	170	Jr.
SS	**Chris Thomas***	**5-11**	**205**	**Sr.**
	Phil Ofili	5-11	200	So.
FS	Jon Davis	6-1	190	So.
	Jonathon Ashley	6-0	195	Jr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Zach Bell	6-2	180	Jr.
P	Brandon Geyer	6-4	200	Sr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	NICHOLLS STATE
Sept. 12	at Minnesota
Sept. 19	at New Mexico
Sept. 26	SAN DIEGO STATE
Oct. 3	at Navy
Oct. 10	TCU
Oct. 17	WYOMING
Oct. 24	at Utah
Oct. 31	at Colorado State
Nov. 7	ARMY
Nov. 14	UNLV
Nov. 21	at BYU

2008 Results

	(8-5, 5-3)	
W	SOUTHERN UTAH	41-7
W	at Wyoming	23-3
W	vs. Houston (Dallas)	31-28
L	UTAH	23-30
L	NAVY	27-33
W	at San Diego State	35-10
W	at UNLV	29-28
W	NEW MEXICO	23-10
W	at Army	16-7
W	COLORADO STATE	38-17
L	BRIGHAM YOUNG	24-38
L	at TCU	10-44
	Armed Forces Bowl	
L	vs. Houston	28-34

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	26.8	53
Rushing	266.9	6
Passing	82.2	117
Total	349.1	69
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	22.2	43
Rushing	141.5	64
Passing	199.9	50
Total	341.5	50
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 13	+ 1.00	10

UNLV REBELS

NATIONAL RANK 81

MWC rank: 5 | Record: 5-7 | MWC record: 2-6 (T-6th) | Stadium: Sam Boyd Stadium (36,800)

Rebels in A Box

COACH: Mike Sanford — At UNLV and overall: 11-36, 4 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Todd Berry
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dennis Therrell
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1994, Big West co-champs
LAST BOWL: 2000, Las Vegas
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 6 offense, 8 defense, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: WR Ryan Wolfe, QB Omar Clayton, LB Jason Beauchamp, DT Malo Taumua
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: UNLV finally has a quarterback (and a spare in Mike Clausen) after five opening-day starters in as many years. Clayton has the multiple targets necessary to effectively run the spread. The Rebels might have the most pure team speed of any MWC club.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: An athletic but unproven running back corps needs to grow up in a hurry. The defense has been a major liability for the Rebels, and several players must step up in the secondary.

OFFENSE

Years of frustration with quarterback injuries, inconsistencies and over-hyped Pac-10 transfers ended last season.

Omar Clayton led the Rebels to a promising start, toppling Iowa State and Arizona State in overtime. When he suffered a season-ending knee injury the first weekend of November, Mike Clausen showed that UNLV finally had the talent and depth at quarterback to go forward.

Clayton, a junior, is a perfect match for the spread offense Mike Sanford brought from Utah's unbeaten 2004 squad. He was back on top of the depth chart in the spring, but Sanford sees his quarterbacks as 1 and 1A.

Senior receiver Ryan Wolfe is the Rebels' career reception and yardage leader, posting the school's first 1,000-yard receiving season since 1994. Phillip Payne, who caught seven touchdowns in his first season, will take some defensive pressure off Wolfe.

The offense's biggest improvement last season came in red zone scoring. After finishing last in the MWC in that area in 2007, the Rebels tied Ohio State for best in the country, converting at 95 percent by scoring 35 times (29 touchdowns) in 37 trips inside the 20.

The other positive for the offense is a line with two All-MWC candidates — guard Joe Hawley and tackle Matt Murphy.

Early indications suggest running back by committee, leaving the door open for Bradley Randle, a top recruit.

DEFENSE

The Rebels are fairly set up front, but success could ride on significant improvements in the secondary.

UNLV had a shot at a .500 season and a bowl invitation last year, only to get torched in the finale by San Diego State freshman quarterback Ryan Lindley.

The staff sent a message to the team, suspending starting safety Daryl Forte in February for unspecified reasons and placing a wholesale emphasis on recruiting defensive backs. Three junior college defensive backs competed in the spring. Another, Mike Grant, arrives in the fall.

Most jobs are open, although Terrance Lee claimed the nickel position. There is athletic talent there. Sophomore Deante' Purvis, primarily a special teams contributor last year, was clocked at a team-best 4.31 seconds in the 40. He's battling for corner. Former quarterback Travis Dixon is in the mix at safety.

Linebacker isn't an issue. The Rebels return Jason Beauchamp, the MWC tackles leader at (127). Starr Fuimaono can dominate, if he recovers from knee surgery.

Defensive tackle Malo Taumua leads the line; he turned in the best defensive performance of the spring, according to Sanford. An impact junior college transfer could be end B.J. Bell, younger brother of former defensive leader Beau Bell.

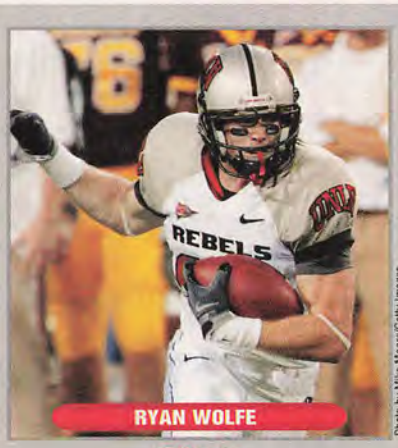
SPECIAL TEAMS

The Rebels are set at placekicker with short-yardage specialist Kyle Watson and long-range threat in Ben Jaekle. Both will also compete for punting duties with senior Brendon Lamers.

Purvis, because of his speed burst, could become one of the most exciting return specialists in the league.

OVERVIEW

UNLV has the offensive weapons to break out from the pack chasing the Mountain West's Big Three — BYU, TCU and Utah. The Rebels have more talent spread throughout the team than at any time in Sanford's tenure. The test will be an October stretch at in-state rival Nevada followed by a brutal MWC home start vs. BYU and Utah.



RYAN WOLFE

Photo by Mike Moore/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Omar Clayton***	**6-1**	**200**	**Jr.**
	Mike Clausen	6-2	210	So.
TB	C.J. Cox	5-11	195	So.
	Channing Trotter	5-8	200	Jr.
WR	Phillip Payne	6-3	200	So.
	Jerriman Robinson*	**6-2**	**190**	**Sr.**
WR	**Ryan Wolfe***	**6-2**	**210**	**Sr.**
	Justin Marvel	6-0	195	Sr.
WR	Rodelin Anthony	6-5	230	Sr.
	Jerriman Robinson	6-2	190	Sr.
WR	Michael Johnson	5-8	170	So.
	Tate Knutson	5-10	175	Jr.
LT	**Matt Murphy***	**6-4**	**300**	**Jr.**
	Yusef Rodgers	6-2	270	Fr.
LG	Sean Tesoro	6-2	290	Fr.
	Ramsey Feagai	6-2	340	Jr.
C	John Gianninoto	6-3	290	Jr.
	Mike Donato	6-3	310	Jr.
RG	**Joe Hawley***	**6-3**	**310**	**Sr.**
	Ramsey Feagai	6-2	340	Jr.
RT	**Evan Marchal***	**6-7**	**300**	**Jr.**
	Thomas Wren	6-6	280	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Matt Kravetz	6-1	245	So.
	Daniel Mareko	6-3	245	Jr.
DT	**Malo Taumua***	**6-1**	**270**	**Jr.**
	Lale Taiese	6-0	295	Jr.
DT	**Martin Tevaseu***	**6-2**	**340**	**Sr.**
	Bennielee Shelby	6-1	275	Fr.
DE	**Isaako Aaitui***	**6-3**	**300**	**Jr.**
	Preston Brooks	6-3	255	Jr.
LB	**Jason Beauchamp***	**6-3**	**235**	**Sr.**
	Nate Carter*	**6-0**	**230**	**So.**
LB	**Ronnie Paulo***	**6-1**	**240**	**Jr.**
	David Blair	6-1	235	Fr.
LB	Starr Fuimaono	6-0	210	Jr.
	(DB) Terrance Lee*	**6-0**	**180**	**Jr.**
CB	Deante' Purvis	5-10	185	So.
	Warren Zeigler	6-0	170	Jr.
CB	Will Chandler	5-11	185	So.
	Quinton Pointer*	**5-10**	**185**	**Jr.**
SS	Travis Dixon	6-0	190	Jr.
	Marquel Martin	5-11	200	Sr.
FS	Chris Jones	6-2	185	So.
	Alex De Giacomo	6-0	185	Jr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Kyle Watson***	**5-9**	**215**	**Sr.**
P	Brendon Lamers	5-11	190	Sr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	SACRAMENTO STATE
Sept. 12	OREGON STATE
Sept. 19	HAWAII
Sept. 26	at Wyoming
Oct. 3	at Nevada
Oct. 10	BYU
Oct. 17	UTAH
Oct. 24	at New Mexico
Oct. 31	at TCU
Nov. 7	COLORADO STATE
Nov. 14	at Air Force
Nov. 28	SAN DIEGO STATE

2008 Results

(5-7, 2-6)

W	UTAH STATE	27-17
L	at Utah	21-42
W	at Arizona State (OT)	23-20
W	IOWA STATE (OT)	34-31
L	NEVADA	27-49
L	at Colorado State	28-41
L	AIR FORCE	28-29
L	at BYU	35-42
L	TCU	14-44
W	NEW MEXICO	27-20
W	WYOMING	22-14
L	at San Diego State	21-42

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.6	58
Rushing	121.7	91
Passing	223.3	49
Total	345.0	73
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	32.6	100
Rushing	213.1	110
Passing	210.1	60
Total	423.2	103
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 0	+ 0.00	62

SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS

NATIONAL RANK 86

MWC rank: 6 | Record: 2-10 | MWC record: 1-7 (T-8th) | Stadium: Qualcomm Stadium (54,000)

Aztecs in A Box

COACH: Brady Hoke — At San Diego State, 1st year; overall: 34-38, 6 years
OFFENSIVE COORINDATOR: Al Borges
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Rocky Long
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1986, WAC
LAST BOWL: 1998, Las Vegas
RETURNING STARTERS: 18; 9 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: WR Vincent Brown, WR DeMarco Sampson, WR Jon Toledo, QB Ryan Lindley, LB Luke Laolagi, DE B.J. Williams
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: MWC's deepest receiving corps is paired with one of the brightest young talents at quarterback. A new defensive scheme could pull the Aztecs out of the doldrums.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The running game has been a non-factor in recent years despite some continuity in personnel. It's going to take a while to develop a winning attitude and physical presence after all those seasons of frustration.

OFFENSE

San Diego State hired one of the hottest coaching candidates around this offseason, snagging Ball State's Brady Hoke after a 12-2 season. Things are going to be much different this fall at San Diego State, a program coming off a 2-10 season.

But the offense has more talent than last year's record would indicate.

Quarterback Ryan Lindley showed plenty of promise as a freshman, throwing for 16 touchdowns and 2,653 yards.

Senior receiver DeMarco Sampson, previously hampered by injuries and buried on the depth chart, was the standout of the spring. He caught six passes for 181 yards in the spring game. San Diego State's leading receiver, Vincent Brown, also returns, as does Jon Toledo.

The Aztecs haven't had much of a running assault in years. There are veterans in the backfield, although Atiyyah Henderson and Brandon Sullivan combined for less than 700 yards last season.

That won't cut it in a league that produced four 1,000-yard rushers last season while the Aztecs trailed everyone by averaging just 73.2 yards a game, third-worst nationally. Henderson and Sullivan are back, but junior Davon Brown made a strong push for playing time in the spring.

Practice by practice in the spring, Hoke asked for relentless effort, discipline and mental toughness. He needs to remake bodies and spirit, especially up front, where the offensive line hasn't been very physical.

But at least the talent is there in the passing game.

DEFENSE

Rocky Long stepped down after a lengthy stint coaching fellow Mountain West Conference school New Mexico. But the defensive guru didn't want out of the business. He wanted to get back to coaching defense without all the responsibilities and time demands of being the head coach.

He has his work cut out as the coordinator at San Diego State, which rarely has been known for its defense. Last season was typical, as the Aztecs trailed the MWC in points yielded with a generous 37.2 average.

It wasn't difficult for Long to win converts.

"Obviously, we're privileged and lucky to have him as defensive coordinator," Hoke said.

Long is installing his signature 3-3-5 defense, but there is just one returning starter in the secondary in cornerback Aaron Moore. Everyone will be learning the scheme together.

Linebacker Luke Laolagi made 99 tackles last season and forced three fumbles. Long's blitzing scheme will turn him loose in the backfield. The Aztecs had only 13 sacks last season, led by 3.5 from returning end B.J. Williams, who earned honorable mention all-league honors.

There is little depth on the line — coached by Hoke — but the front-line players give SDSU a chance for improvement.

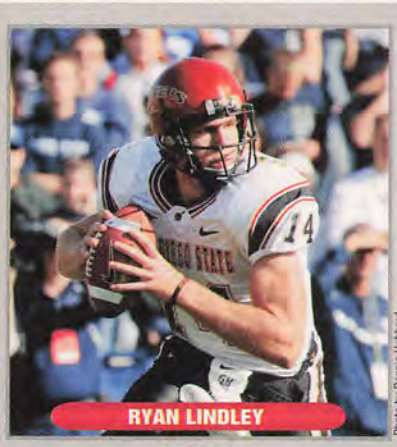
SPECIAL TEAMS

Returning starting placekicker Lane Yoshida hit 8 of 12 field goals in 2008. In the spring game, he made a 49-yard field goal with 17 seconds remaining.

Starting punter Brian Stahovich returns after a freshman season in which he averaged 39.5 yards per punt. Mekell Wesley again will handle punt return duties.

OVERVIEW

If Hoke could get players to Ball State, the hope is he'll certainly be able to lure some to San Diego. There's a lot of talent at the offensive skill positions and San Diego State has a high number of returning starters. If Rocky Long can work his magic on defense, the MWC's long-sleeping giant may finally awaken.



RYAN LINDLEY

Photo by Dennis Hubbard

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Ryan Lindley***	**6-3**	**205**	**So.**
	Drew Westling	6-2	220	Sr.
TB	**Atiyyah Henderson***	**5-9**	**180**	**Sr.**
	Brandon Sullivan	5-11	205	Jr.
WR	**Vincent Brown***	**6-0**	**185**	**Jr.**
	Roberto Wallace*	**6-4**	**215**	**Sr.**
WR	Jon Toledo	6-3	215	Sr.
	Mekell Wesley*	**5-10**	**175**	**Sr.**
WR	DeMarco Sampson	6-2	210	Sr.
	Doug Deakin	6-0	185	Jr.
TE	**Matthew Kawulok***	**6-2**	**245**	**Sr.**
	Tony DeMartinis	6-5	260	Sr.
LT	**Peter Nelson***	**6-5**	**285**	**Sr.**
	Mike Matamua	6-4	305	So.
LG	Leo Grassilli	6-3	280	So.
	Emilio Rivera	6-4	330	So.
C	**Trask Iosefa***	**6-0**	**315**	**Jr.**
	Damian Shankle	6-2	310	Sr.
RG	**Ikaika Aken-Moleta***	**6-2**	**305**	**Sr.**
	Kellen Farr	6-7	320	So.
RT	Kurtis Gunther	6-8	280	So.
	Tom Rische	6-4	320	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Jerome Long***	**6-5**	**250**	**So.**
	Jake Tauanuu	6-1	240	Jr.
DT	**Jonathan Soto***	**6-3**	**270**	**Sr.**
	Ernie Lawson*	**6-3**	**300**	**Jr.**
DE	**B.J. Williams***	**6-3**	**250**	**Jr.**
	Eric Ikonne	6-0	250	Jr.
LB	**Andrew Preston***	**6-1**	**225**	**Jr.**
	Miles Burris	6-2	245	So.
LB	**Luke Laolagi***	**6-1**	**230**	**Sr.**
	Marcus Yarbrough	6-2	245	Jr.
LB	Jerry Milling	5-10	230	Sr.
	Bryan Finkel	6-2	225	Sr.
CB	**Aaron Moore***	**6-0**	**195**	**Sr.**
	Kwincy Edwards	5-11	165	Sr.
CB	Davion Mauldin	5-10	175	Sr.
	Derek Mack	5-9	175	Jr.
S	Romeo Horn	6-1	185	Jr.
	Jose Perez	6-1	180	Jr.
SS	Martrell Fantroy	6-1	215	Jr.
	Nick Sandford	6-2	210	Sr.
FS	Dey Juan Hemmings	5-11	195	Jr.
	Vincent Camarda	6-2	195	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Lane Yoshida***	**5-10**	**195**	**Sr.**
P	**Brian Stahovich***	**6-0**	**170**	**So.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	at UCLA
Sept. 12	SOUTHERN UTAH
Sept. 19	at Idaho
Sept. 26	at Air Force
Oct. 3	NEW MEXICO STATE
Oct. 17	BYU
Oct. 24	at Colorado State
Oct. 31	NEW MEXICO
Nov. 7	TCU
Nov. 14	WYOMING
Nov. 21	at Utah
Nov. 28	at UNLV

2008 Results

(2-10, 1-7)

L	CAL POLY	27-29
L	at Notre Dame	13-21
L	at San Jose State	10-35
W	IDAHO	45-17
L	at TCU	7-41
L	AIR FORCE	10-35
L	at New Mexico	7-70
L	COLORADO STATE	34-38
L	at Wyoming	10-35
L	at BYU	12-41
L	UTAH	14-63
W	UNLV	42-21

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	19.3	104
Rushing	73.2	117
Passing	239.3	42
Total	312.4	99
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	37.2	113
Rushing	247.5	118
Passing	213.3	68
Total	460.8	113
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 6	- 0.50	89

COLORADO STATE RAMS

NATIONAL RANK 87

MWC rank: 7 | Record: 7-6 | MWC record: 4-4 (5th) | Stadium: Sonny Lubick Field at Hughes Stadium (34,000)

Rams in A Box

COACH: Steve Fairchild — At Colorado State and overall: 7-6, 1 year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Greg Peterson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Larry Kerr
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2002
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 7 offense, 5 defense
PLAYERS TO WATCH: S Klint Kubiak, WR Rashaun Greer, WR Dion Morton, OL Shelley Smith, LB Mychal Sisson
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The receivers are in place for the passing game, and the offensive line is in place for a quality running attack. The Rams overcame quarterback inexperience last year and will need to do so again.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: It will be running back by committee until a replacement is found for Gartrell Johnson ... and that could take a year or two. Defensively, there's too much inexperience up front to move to the top half of the MWC defenses.

OFFENSE

Colorado State coach Steve Fairchild might have laughed last spring at the notion his fifth-year senior — first-time starting quarterback Billy Farris — would sign an NFL free agent deal after the season.

Farris overcame Fairchild's harsh spring assessment to steer the Rams to a bowl berth and their first winning season since 2003.

In 2009, Fairchild is back to having to rely on a fifth-year senior and first-time starter under center as Grant Stucker appears to be the likely successor to Farris, beating out junior college transfer Jon Eastman. Neither seemed to have fully gained Fairchild's confidence.

"We're farther away at quarterback and farther away at running back than I thought," Fairchild said at the end of spring.

There are two wild cards in the quarterback race. Fairchild will give incoming freshman Nico Ranieri a shot. Klay Kubiak, the son of Houston Texas head coach Gary Kubiak, returns from off-season shoulder surgery.

CSU hopes to rely on its traditional power running style, helped by four returning starters on the line and a combined 125 starts by the veteran unit.

The running back position likely will be handled by committee. The best running back in the spring, junior John Mosure, has proven his versatility in the past in the slot and in the backfield.

Whoever takes over at quarterback will have a deep receiving corps. Senior Rashaun Greer is a good-sized target coming off second-team All-MWC honors. Senior Dion Morton is the pure speed wideout, often used on reverses.

The big breakthrough this spring came from converted wide receiver T.J. Borcky, a quarterback until a month into last season. Borcky will expand his role in the team's Wildcat formation.

DEFENSE

Despite some rough stretches, defensive coordinator Larry Kerr brought an element of toughness back with him last season. Linebackers made more tackles than the safeties, and more of the same is expected this fall.

Sophomore Mychal Sisson, a MWC Freshman of the Year candidate in 2008, will move to outside linebacker after two-year starter Ricky Brewer was suspended for the 2009 season, although he still practiced with the team in the spring and was clearly the best defensive player.

The secondary had injury problems a year ago, but looks to be solid this year, especially at safety.

Cornerback-turned free safety Elijah-Blu Smith turned in the hardest hits of the spring, and strong safety Klint Kubiak, the oldest son of the Texans coach, is the defensive leader and looks to get through his final season injury free.

While lacking the individual standouts of last season, the defensive line rotation should be solid.

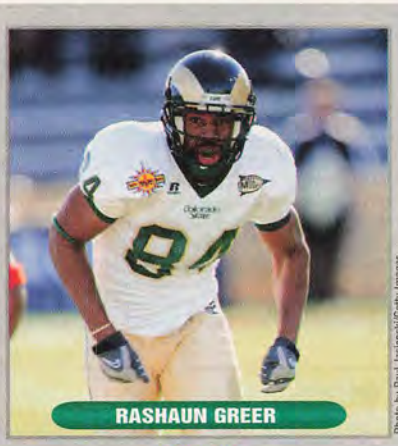
SPECIAL TEAMS

One of the most anticipated freshman arrivals is *USA Today* All-America punter Pete Kontodiakos.

Sophomore kicker Ben DeLine unexpectedly burned his redshirt last season when ex-Ram Jason Smith suffered a freak injury in the final preseason scrimmage. DeLine saved the Rams from a loss to Sacramento State with a last-second field goal, but he yielded the job when Smith returned.

OVERVIEW

It's always easier for a new staff in the second year, and Fairchild believes he has a foundation in place to return to CSU's glory years. At the same time, there's no indication the Rams can overtake the league's top three teams in 2009.



RASHAUN GREER

Photo by Paul Jasienski/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Grant Stucker	6-2	207	Sr.
	Jon Eastman	6-2	214	Jr.
RB	John Mosure	5-10	202	Jr.
	Leonard Mason	6-0	215	Jr.
FB	**Zac Pauga***	**6-0**	**240**	**Jr.**
	Jason Klingerman	6-1	244	Fr.
WR	**Rashaun Greer***	**6-1**	**203**	**Sr.**
	Ryan Gardner	6-1	170	Sr.
WR	**Dion Morton***	**5-10**	**163**	**Sr.**
	T.J. Borcky	6-4	197	So
TE	Eric Peitz	6-5	250	Jr.
	Adam Seymore	6-4	246	Jr.
WT	**Cole Pemberton***	**6-7**	**316**	**Sr.**
	Joe Caprioglio	6-6	283	Fr.
WG	**Shelley Smith***	**6-4**	**293**	**Sr.**
	Jake Gdowski	6-3	295	So.
C	**Tim Walter***	**6-6**	**290**	**Sr.**
	Tyler McDermott	6-2	273	So.
SG	**Adrian Martinez***	**6-4**	**303**	**Sr.**
	Scott Benedict	6-4	289	Sr.
ST	Mark Starr	6-5	282	Jr.
	Paul Madsen	6-4	280	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
RE	Cory Macon	6-6	239	Jr.
	Zach Tiedgen	6-4	244	Fr.
DT	Ty Whittier	6-5	270	Jr.
	James Morehead	6-6	296	Sr.
NT	Guy Miller	6-3	288	Jr.
	Nuku Latu	6-2	275	So.
DE	Sam Stewart	6-3	250	Sr.
	Ben Tedford	6-6	242	Fr.
LB	**Mychal Sisson***	**5-11**	**201**	**So.**
	James Skelton	6-2	209	Fr.
LB	Alex Williams	6-2	220	Jr.
	Chris Gipson	5-11	220	Fr.
LB	Michael Kawulok	6-3	220	So.
	Luke Diehl	6-1	214	So.
CB	**Gerard Thomas***	**5-9**	**166**	**So.**
	DeAngelo Wilkinson	5-10	181	Jr.
CB	**Nick Oppenneer***	**5-10**	**175**	**Sr.**
	Marcus Shaw	5-8	173	Fr.
SS	**Klint Kubiak***	**6-0**	**202**	**Sr.**
	Josh Gabler	6-0	199	Sr.
FS	**Elijah-Blu Smith***	**5-11**	**181**	**So.**
	Jarrad McKay	6-0	193	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Ben DeLine	6-0	166	So.
P	Pete Kontodiakos	6-3	185	Fr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	at Colorado
Sept. 12	WEBER STATE
Sept. 19	NEVADA
Sept. 26	at BYU
Oct. 3	at Idaho
Oct. 10	UTAH
Oct. 17	at TCU
Oct. 24	SAN DIEGO STATE
Oct. 31	AIR FORCE
Nov. 7	at UNLV
Nov. 21	at New Mexico
Nov. 27	WYOMING

2008 Results

(7-6, 4-4)

L	vs. Colorado (Denver)	17-38
W	SACRAMENTO STATE	23-20
W	HOUSTON	28-25
L	at California	7-42
W	UNLV	41-28
L	TCU	7-13
L	at Utah	16-49
W	at San Diego State	38-34
L	BRIGHAM YOUNG	42-45
L	at Air Force	17-38
W	NEW MEXICO	20-6
W	at Wyoming	31-20
	New Mexico Bowl	
W	vs. Fresno State	40-35

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.2	60
Rushing	147.6	58
Passing	248.2	32
Total	395.9	41
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	30.2	89
Rushing	190.1	102
Passing	220.0	79
Total	410.1	96
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 2	+ 0.15	49

WYOMING COWBOYS

NATIONAL RANK 98

MWC rank: 8 | Record: 4-8 | MWC record: 1-7 (T-8th) | Stadium: War Memorial Stadium (30,514)

Cowboys in A Box

COACH: Dave Christensen — At Wyoming and overall: 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Marcus Arroyo
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Marty English
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1993, WAC co-champs
LAST BOWL: 2004, Las Vegas
RETURNING STARTERS: 17; 7 offense, 8 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: DT John Fletcher, DE Mitch Unrein, LB Gabe Knapton, WR Greg Bolling
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Nearly every new staff brings in a fresh level of enthusiasm, and Wyoming is no exception. The defense should remain solid while the offense makes the transition.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: There's no running game to rely upon and a steep learning curve lies ahead for the quarterbacks in the spread. It could take awhile to generate any confidence on offense.

OFFENSE

For a school with a logo of a cowboy on a bucking bronco, shared with the state license plates, it's a wonder no one in the marketing department came up with the 2009 theme sooner.

"A whole new rodeo."

That's what new head coach Dave Christensen brings from his successful stint as Missouri's offensive coordinator. Under former coach Joe Glenn, the Cowboys had fallen out of MWC contention, largely because of a propensity to turn over the football.

The Cowboys went through multiple quarterbacks in recent years and there could be more transition ahead as Wyoming adapts to Christensen's spread offense. The goal is rising from last in MWC scoring (12.7 points a game) to somewhere north of the middle of the pack.

Last season, three quarterbacks combined for 17 interceptions and seven touchdowns. One of them, Karsten Sween, again had an outstanding spring camp. But, his career has been plagued by turnovers.

Junior college transfer Dax Crum, originally an Arizona State signee, struggled last season and was suspended for the spring game. Christensen said he will be back.

The reputation of Missouri's spread offense and what Christensen accomplished with ex-Tiger quarterback Chase Daniel, certainly paid dividends on the recruiting trail. Combined with the hiring of offensive coordinator/quarterback coach Marcus Arroyo from San Jose State, Wyoming landed Austyn Carta-Samuels, one of the more highly rated quarterbacks on the West Coast.

He will compete for time along with junior college transfer Robert Benjamin.

While there are plenty of candidates for quarterback, running back is a bigger issue after losing nearly 2,000 yards rushing in Devin Moore and Wynel Seldon. Junior Darius Terry was named the most improved back in the spring and goes in as the starter.

Most of the receivers return, led by Greg Bolling. But the offensive line has some rebuilding.

DEFENSE

Despite losing All-MWC leader Ward Dobbs, his 101 tackles and game-winning interception return at Tennessee, Wyoming is fairly well stocked on defense with seven starters back.

The top returnee is second-team All-MWC defensive lineman John Fletcher, who recorded 6.5 sacks last year. Linebacker Gabe Knapton is now a third-year sophomore along with Brian Hendricks, named the most improved linebacker in the spring.

Brothers Marcell Gipson, a junior, and Tashaun Gipson, a sophomore, man the cornerback spots. Although Tashaun Gipson had a key interception in the spring game, the staff vote for most improved defensive back went to strong safety Jamichael Hall, a redshirt junior college transfer.

The only staff carryover is Marty English, who was promoted to defensive coordinator.

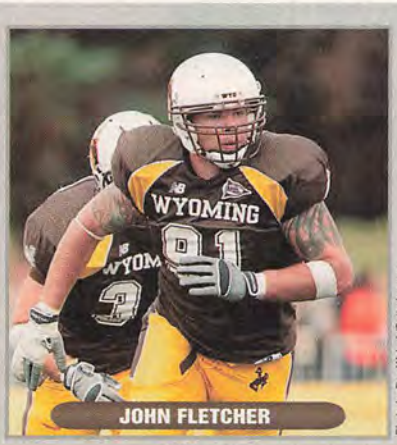
SPECIAL TEAMS

Nick Landess is battling projected starter Jake Scott for both kickoff and field goal duties. Austin McCoy returns after ranking last among MWC punters in 2008.

Wyoming's 7,220-foot elevation would seem beneficial to punters and kickers, and the Cowboys have had some excellent ones through the years. But unpredictable winds can cause problems.

OVERVIEW

Wyoming made a terrific hire in Christensen, but he's just one of three new names in the MWC. The Cowboys have the defensive personnel to make some noise, but the offense will need time to mature and grasp a new system.



JOHN FLETCHER

Photo by: Dee Welsch/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Karsten Sween	6-2	229	Sr.
	Dax Crum	6-4	206	Jr.
RB	Darius Terry	5-11	209	Jr.
	James Davis	5-9	186	So.
WR	**Brandon Stewart***	**5-11**	**193**	**So.**
	Kaither Holiway	6-3	210	So.
WR	**Greg Bolling***	**6-2**	**180**	**Sr.**
	Donate Morgan	5-11	185	Sr.
WR	**David Leonard***	**6-4**	**197**	**Jr.**
	Zach Bolger	5-10	180	Jr.
TE	**Jesson Salyards***	**6-5**	**236**	**Sr.**
	Joe Evers	6-5	250	Jr.
LT	**Ryan Otterson***	**6-5**	**275**	**Sr.**
	Josh Leonard	6-4	250	Fr.
LG	**Sam Sterner***	**6-4**	**302**	**Jr.**
	Zack Kennedy	6-6	323	Sr.
C	Russ Arnold	6-4	290	Sr.
	Travis Hillen	6-5	274	So.
RG	Nick Carlson	6-4	235	Fr.
	Jack Tennant	6-4	305	Jr.
RT	**Clayton Kirven***	**6-6**	**310**	**So.**
	John Hutchins	6-5	286	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DT	**John Fletcher***	**6-6**	**272**	**Sr.**
	Mike Neuhaus	6-3	256	Sr.
NT	Alex Stover	6-3	265	So.
	Fred Givens*	**6-0**	**305**	**Sr.**
DE	**Mitch Unrein***	**6-4**	**270**	**Sr.**
	Corey Orth	6-5	240	Fr.
LB	**Weston Johnson***	**6-3**	**233**	**Sr.**
	Matt Birkeness	6-4	226	Fr.
LB	**Gabe Knapton***	**6-3**	**238**	**So.**
	Alex Toney	6-1	220	Jr.
LB	Brian Hendricks	6-1	221	So.
	Ben Durbin	6-3	233	Fr.
LB	Matt Barella	6-2	233	Sr.
	Bryson Studnicka	6-3	234	So.
CB	**Marcell Gipson***	**5-10**	**178**	**Jr.**
	David James	5-11	179	Fr.
CB	**Tashaun Gipson***	**6-0**	**190**	**So.**
	Tramaine Brown	5-9	172	Sr.
SS	Jamichael Hall	6-2	190	Jr.
	Keith Lewis	5-11	200	Jr.
FS	**Chris Prosinski***	**6-1**	**208**	**Jr.**
	T.J. Atwater	5-9	190	Sr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Jake Scott***	**5-8**	**158**	**Sr.**
P	**Austin McCoy***	**6-3**	**195**	**So.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	WEBER STATE
Sept. 12	TEXAS
Sept. 19	at Colorado
Sept. 26	UNLV
Oct. 3	at Florida Atlantic
Oct. 10	NEW MEXICO
Oct. 17	at Air Force
Oct. 31	at Utah
Nov. 7	BYU
Nov. 14	at San Diego State
Nov. 21	TCU
Nov. 27	at Colorado State

2008 Results

(4-8, 1-7)

W	OHIO	21-20
L	AIR FORCE	3-23
W	NORTH DAKOTA STATE	16-13
L	at BYU	0-44
L	BOWLING GREEN	16-45
L	at New Mexico	0-24
L	UTAH	7-40
L	at TCU	7-54
W	SAN DIEGO STATE	35-10
W	at Tennessee	13-7
L	at UNLV	14-22
L	COLORADO STATE	20-31

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	12.7	119
Rushing	178.3	34
Passing	117.7	114
Total	296.0	108
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	27.8	73
Rushing	140.2	59
Passing	189.5	31
Total	329.7	38
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 22	- 1.83	118

NEW MEXICO LOBOS

NATIONAL RANK 99

MWC rank: 9 | Record: 4-8 | MWC record: 2-6 (T-6th) | Stadium: University (40,094)

Lobos in A Box

COACH: Mike Locksley — At New Mexico and overall: 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Darrell Dickey
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Doug Mallory
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1964, WAC co-champions
LAST BOWL: 2007, New Mexico
RETURNING STARTERS: 11; 6 offense, 3 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Donovan Porterie, S Ian Clark, PK James Aho, C Erik Cook
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The offense should revive with the advent of the spread, although it might take awhile to get the new system established. UNM is always solid in the kicking department.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Lobos came out of spring unsettled at quarterback, and a battle can always be a distraction. The defense faces some adjustment to a new system. UNM plays at Texas A&M and Texas Tech in the first four weeks.

OFFENSE

Before stepping down after the 2008 season, Rocky Long made his living at New Mexico with defense and a strong running game, boasting a 1,000-yard rusher in seven consecutive seasons.

Now, long-time Ron Zook assistant Mike Locksley takes over a program not in need of a drastic fix.

"This isn't a rebuilding, it's more of a renovation," said Locksley.

The 39-year-old former offensive coordinator with a well-established national recruiting reputation, has made a priority of updating the Lobos offense.

He immediately installed a no-huddle in the spring. Quarterback Donovan Porterie, returning from an ACL injury, was kept out of contact in the spring, which will hurt his learning curve in the new offense. Porterie will be looking to regain his 2007 form, when he passed for 3,006 yards.

Sophomore quarterback Brad Gruner played well at times in eight starts last season.

Look for James Wright, who had two 100-yard games as a third-teamer last year, to handle the running attack, although redshirt freshman A.J. Butler made a move up the depth chart this spring.

The biggest candidate for postseason honors is two-year starting center Erik Cook. All those 1,000-rushing seasons were aided by big, smash-mouth offensive lines. He's joined by tackle Byron Bell coming off an outstanding freshman year.

Although three top receivers return, led by Chris Hernandez, no one put up big numbers because of last year's quarterback difficulties.

"There will be a lot more two back than one back," Locksley said. "It's a completely different deal offensively. No-huddle and changing up tempos will be a priority."

DEFENSE

Long's signature 3-3-5 defense goes with him to San Diego State, where he is the new defensive coordinator. New UNM coordinator Doug Mallory, most recently with LSU, is installing a more conventional 4-3 scheme.

Locksley wants to retain the traditional New Mexico aggression on defense, however.

"We didn't change for sake of change," Locksley said. "We want to do what we're comfortable doing."

Despite losing all three starters on the defensive line, there's some experience and junior college transfer Peter Gardner is expected to make an immediate impact. The change in scheme leaves the Lobos lacking in depth along the line.

Clint McPeek, who played the old "Lobo" hybrid position, would be the leader at linebacker after making 103 tackles and breaking up nine passes last season. But he missed spring ball with two knee surgeries and is questionable for the season.

After losing two three-year starters at the corners, senior safeties Ian Clark and Frankie Solomon will carry the secondary.

SPECIAL TEAMS

It's unlikely anyone would want to tinker with New Mexico's successful tradition in the kicking department. James Aho earned some Freshman All-America notice last season with a school rookie record 18 field goals. Senior punter Adam Miller placed 11 punts inside the 20.

Clark is also exceptional in the return department leading the league in kickoff returns.

OVERVIEW

The defense wasn't broke so it's a little curious that Locksley decided to fix it. The offense can't help but improve. There will be plenty of tape ready for UNM to review when MWC play begins, but the Lobos will still have an element of surprise for their opponents with unfamiliar systems on both sides of the ball.

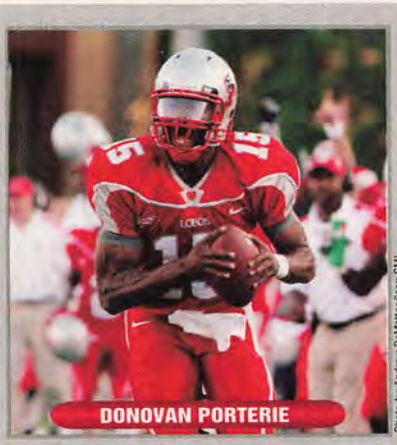

DONOVAN PORTERIE

Photo by Andrew DeMattos/Icon SMI

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Donovan Porterie	6-3	206	Sr.
	Brad Gruner*	**6-2**	**217**	**So.**
TB	James Wright	5-11	235	So.
	A.J. Butler	6-1	195	Fr.
FB	Josh Fussell	6-2	235	Jr.
	Terence Brown	6-0	186	Jr.
WR	**Roland Bruno***	**5-10**	**166**	**Sr.**
	Chris Hernandez	6-3	191	Jr.
WR	**Michael Scarlett***	**6-2**	**182**	**So.**
	Bryant Williams	5-11	190	Jr.
TE	Jonathan Mader	6-4	200	Fr.
	Lucas Reed	6-6	215	Fr.
LT	Ivan Hernandez	6-6	295	Sr.
	Maurice Mears	6-4	295	Jr.
LG	Mike Cannon	6-3	302	Jr.
	Zayn Bin-Bilal	6-5	320	Jr.
C	**Erik Cook***	**6-6**	**312**	**Sr.**
	Ben Contreras	6-2	300	Sr.
RG	**Joshua Taufalele***	**6-2**	**320**	**Sr.**
	Derek Tallent	6-4	309	Jr.
RT	**Byron Bell***	**6-5**	**325**	**So.**
	Karlin Givens	6-3	295	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	DeAndre Davis	6-2	245	Sr.
	Jaymar Latchison	6-3	245	So.
DT	Peter Gardner	6-4	295	Jr.
	Kendall Briscoe	6-1	271	Sr.
DT	Brett Kennedy	6-3	272	So.
	Jaymar Latchison	6-3	245	So.
DE	Kendall Briscoe	6-1	285	Sr.
	Jonathan Rainey	6-2	225	So.
LB	**Clint McPeek***	**6-1**	**227**	**Sr.**
	Carmen Messina	6-2	210	So.
LB	Seth Johannemann	6-3	224	Jr.
	Tray Hardaway	6-0	215	Sr.
LB	Terel Anyaibe	6-2	221	Jr.
	Cody Neely	6-2	201	Jr.
CB	Anthony Hooks	5-11	170	So.
	Danny Martin	6-1	211	Sr.
CB	Frankie Baca	5-11	190	Sr.
	Alex Bustos	6-0	185	Jr.
S	**Ian Clark***	**6-0**	**210**	**Sr.**
	Bubba Forrest	6-1	205	So.
S	**Frankie Solomon***	**5-10**	**180**	**Sr.**
	Mica Williams	6-2	195	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**James Aho***	**5-9**	**175**	**So.**
P	**Adam Miller***	**6-2**	**224**	**Sr.**

*** Returning Starters in Bold**

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	at Texas A&M
Sept. 12	TULSA
Sept. 19	AIR FORCE
Sept. 26	NEW MEXICO STATE
Oct. 3	at Texas Tech
Oct. 10	at Wyoming
Oct. 24	UNLV
Oct. 31	at San Diego State
Nov. 7	at Utah
Nov. 14	BYU
Nov. 21	COLORADO STATE
Nov. 28	at TCU

2008 Results

(4-8, 2-6)

L	TCU	3-26
L	TEXAS A&M	22-28
W	ARIZONA	36-28
L	at Tulsa	14-56
W	at New Mexico State	35-24
W	WYOMING	24-0
L	at BYU	3-21
W	SAN DIEGO STATE	70-7
L	at Air Force	10-23
L	UTAH	10-13
L	at UNLV	20-27
L	at Colorado State	6-20

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	21.1	94
Rushing	208.3	16
Passing	131.3	110
Total	339.6	81
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	22.8	46
Rushing	122.3	26
Passing	213.5	70
Total	335.8	45
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 3	+ 0.25	43

With Jet-Fueled Offense, Houston Rockets to the Top

Will there be a changing of the guard in Conference USA's West Division?

Tulsa has claimed back-to-back titles, but Houston, under second-year coach Kevin Sumlin, is poised to overtake the Golden Hurricane. Houston returns quarterback Case Keenum, the league's Offensive Player of the Year, along with rising running back star Bryce Beall and 1,000-yard receiver Tyron Carrier.

Keenum, a junior, passed for more than 5,000 (yes, 5,000) yards last season. He completed a league-best 67 percent of his passes, tossing 44 touchdowns. He was intercepted only 11 times in nearly 600 attempts.

The Cougars were one of three C-USA teams to score more than 500 points last season. They had 70 in a stunning blowout of West champ Tulsa.

Tulsa will have to regroup after losing quarterback David Johnson (4,059 yards, 46 touchdowns) and running back Tarrion Adams (1,523 yards, 14 touchdowns), but coach Todd Graham is a master at the quick rebuilding project.

In the East, Southern Miss possesses similar explosive ingredients as Houston.

Sophomore quarterback Austin Davis passed for 3,128 yards and 23 touchdowns in his first year in coach Larry Fedora's spread offense and was picked off only eight times.

Running back Damion Fletcher, suspended in the spring for an off-campus incident, will return and attempt a fourth straight 1,000-yard season. He led C-USA a year ago with an average of 109.4 yards per game.

And receiver DeAndre Brown has the talent and skill to compete for Offensive Player of the Year honors with Keenum. Brown, a highly touted member of Fedora's first signing class, had 1,117 receiving yards as a freshman. He finished with 12 touchdown catches.

— Phil Stukenborg

Conference USA Picks

		Good news	Bad news	Our call
EAST	1. Southern Miss	QB Austin Davis, WR DeAndre Brown more dangerous as sophomores.	Golden Eagles lost LB Gerald McRath a year early to the NFL Draft.	Davis, Brown and RB Damion Fletcher combo could shatter more offensive records en route to title.
EAST	2. East Carolina	QB Patrick Pinkney was granted a sixth year of eligibility by the NCAA.	LB Pierre Bell (100 tackles) and TE Davon Drew (fifth-round pick) are gone.	With eight starters back on each side, Pirates more than capable of winning the East again.
EAST	3. Memphis	Influx of transfers give Tigers legitimate chance at first East title.	Tigers need consistency at QB, improvement in the secondary.	Could challenge Southern Miss for division title, but league road schedule is tough.
EAST	4. Marshall	Herd has RB Darius Marshall, TE Cody Slate, DL Albert McClellan.	Marshall lost seven of its last eight a year ago; needs better play from QB Mark Cann.	Good enough to end four-year bowl drought and enjoy first winning season since 2003 under Bob Pruett.
EAST	5. UCF	Defensive front seven strong again; 10 starters back on offense.	UCF ranked last in league in total and scoring offense last season.	Another difficult season, especially with games at Southern Miss and East Carolina.
EAST	6. UAB	UAB has 11 starters back on offense, led by dual-threat QB Joe Webb.	Lost four starters on defense, including All-C-USA corner Kevin Sanders.	UAB beat UCF 15-0 to end last season and might have enough to finish ahead of the Knights.
WEST	1. Houston	Major threats return: QB Case Keenum, RB Bryce Beall, WR Tyron Carrier.	Defensive losses include C-USA Defensive Player of the Year Philip Hunt.	With so much offense, Cougars poised to end Tulsa's two-year title run in West.
WEST	2. Tulsa	Eight starters are back on defense; back seven should be very good.	Heavy, heavy losses on offense, including QB David Johnson.	Tough to get back to top, but never count out a Todd Graham-coached team.
WEST	3. UTEP	Trevor Vittatoe (33 TDs last season) is C-USA's second-best quarterback.	PK Jose Martinez, RB Terrell Jackson, LB Adam Vincent all gone.	Schedule includes winnable road games; UTEP could break three-year bowl drought.
WEST	4. Tulane	RB Andre Anderson back from shoulder injury; C-USA's top rusher?	LT Troy Kropog completed his career and was taken in fourth round of the NFL Draft.	The talent level is not bad; there's enough here for six wins and a bowl bid.
WEST	5. SMU	Coach June Jones begins second year with potentially explosive offense.	QB Bo Levi Mitchell threw 23 INTs last season; SMU last in rushing defense.	Season will be more entertaining, but a bowl berth may be another year off.
WEST	6. Rice	Eight starters return on defense, led by all-league DB Andrew Sendejo.	Huge losses on offense: QB Chase Clement, TE James Casey, WR Jarett Dillard.	Getting anywhere close to last year's 10-3 season will be an impossibility.

Lindy's 2009 ALL C-USA Team

OFFENSE - First Team

QB	Case Keenum	Jr.	Houston
RB	Damion Fletcher	Sr.	Southern Miss
RB	Bryce Beall	So.	Houston
WR	DeAndre Brown	So.	Southern Miss
WR	Emmanuel Sanders	Sr.	SMU
TE	Cody Slate	Sr.	Marshall
C	Jake Seitz	Sr.	UAB
OL	Ryan Hebert	Sr.	Southern Miss
OL	Chris Thompson	So.	Houston
OL	Andrew Nierman	Jr.	Tulane
OL	Terence Campbell	Sr.	East Carolina
AP	Darius Marshall	Jr.	Marshall
PK	Ben Hartman	Sr.	East Carolina

DEFENSE - First Team

DL	Albert McClellan	Sr.	Marshall
DL	Bruce Miller	Jr.	UCF
DL	C.J. Wilson	Sr.	East Carolina
DL	Anthony Gray	Jr.	Southern Miss
LB	Mario Harvey	Sr.	Marshall
LB	Lawrence Young	Jr.	UCF
LB	Nick Johnson	Sr.	East Carolina
DB	James Lockett	Sr.	Tulsa
DB	Van Eskridge	Sr.	East Carolina
DB	Brandon Brinkley	Sr.	Houston
DB	Andrew Sendejo	Sr.	Rice
P	Ross Thevenot	Sr.	Tulane

OFFENSE - Second Team

QB	Trevor Vittatoe	Jr.	UTEP
RB	Andre Anderson	Sr.	Tulane
RB	Curtis Steele	Sr.	Memphis
WR	Carlos Singleton	Sr.	Memphis
WR	Tyron Carrier	So.	Houston
TE	Jeffery Anderson	Jr.	UAB
C	Sean Allen	Sr.	East Carolina
OL	Terence Edge	Jr.	UAB
OL	Kyle Burkhart	Sr.	Southern Miss
OL	C.J. Wood	So.	Marshall
OL	Tyler Holmes	So.	Tulsa
AP	Dwayne Harris	Jr.	East Carolina
PK	Ben Bell	Sr.	Houston

DEFENSE - Second Team

DL	Torrell Troup	Sr.	UCF
DL	Michael Janac	Jr.	Marshall
DL	Reggie Scott	Sr.	Tulane
DL	Jay Ross	Sr.	East Carolina
LB	Pete Fleps	Jr.	SMU
LB	Mike Bryan	Sr.	Tulsa
LB	Greg Jackson	Sr.	Memphis
DB	Corey Sonnier	Sr.	Tulane
DB	Eddie Hicks	Sr.	Southern Miss
DB	DeQuan Bembry	So.	Marshall
DB	Kenny Sims	Jr.	Tulsa
P	Chase Turner	Sr.	Houston

THE BIG ONES

Sept. 6	Ole Miss at Memphis
Sept. 12	East Carolina at West Virginia
Sept. 12	Houston at Oklahoma State
Sept. 19	Virginia at Southern Miss
Sept. 26	Texas Tech at Houston
Oct. 3	East Carolina at Marshall
Oct. 14	Boise State at Tulsa
Oct. 17	Memphis at Southern Miss
Oct. 27	East Carolina at Memphis
Oct. 31	Southern Miss at Houston
Nov. 5	Virginia Tech at East Carolina
Nov. 7	Houston at Tulsa
Nov. 14	Southern Miss at Marshall
Nov. 15	East Carolina at Tulsa
Nov. 28	Southern Miss at East Carolina

Bowl Connection

Champion
Liberty vs. SEC

C-USA #2
St. Petersburg vs. Big East

C-USA #3
Armed Forces vs. Mountain West

C-USA #4
New Orleans Bowl vs. Sun Belt champion

C-USA #5
Hawaii vs. WAC

C-USA #6
Texas vs. Big 12 or Navy*

C-USA #7
EagleBank vs. ACC**

*If Navy isn't bowl eligible or Big 12 doesn't have an eligible team
**If Army isn't bowl eligible

TOP 10 NFL TALENT

1. C.J. Wilson	DE	Sr.	East Carolina	Had 18.5 tackles for lost yardage in '08.
2. Cody Slate	TE	Sr.	Marshall	Has 19 career touchdown receptions.
3. Van Eskridge	DB	Sr.	East Carolina	97 tackles, four interceptions in '08.
4. Emmanuel Sanders	WR	Sr.	SMU	Has SMU-record 27 career TD catches.
5. Damion Fletcher	RB	Sr.	Southern Miss	Three straight 1,000-yard seasons.
6. Jay Ross	DT	Sr.	East Carolina	Had 9.5 tackles for loss, five sacks, in '08.
7. Brandon Brinkley	DB	Sr.	Houston	Broke up 15 passes last season.
8. DeAndre Brown	WR	So.	Southern Miss	Had 1,117 yards and 12 TDs in '08.
9. Albert McClellan	DE	Sr.	Marshall	Was 2006 C-USA Defensive Player of Year.
10. Carlos Singleton	WR	Sr.	Memphis	A 6-8 nightmare of a matchup for DBs.

Most Valuable Player	Offensive Player of the Year	Defensive Player of the Year	Newcomer of the Year
Case Keenum QB, Houston	DeAndre Brown WR, Southern Miss	C.J. Wilson DL, East Carolina	Hendrick Leverette LB, Southern Miss

HONOR ROLL

Most Accurate Passer	Case Keenum	Houston
Strongest Arm	Trevor Vittatoe	UTEP
Best Scrambler	Joe Webb	UAB
Coolest in the Clutch	Case Keenum	Houston
Toughest to Bring Down	Damion Fletcher, RB	Southern Miss
Best Hands	Carlos Singleton, WR	Memphis
Most Dangerous Deep Threat	DeAndre Brown, WR	Southern Miss
Best Pass Blocker	Chris Thompson, OT	Houston
Best Run Blocker	Calvin Wilson, OT	Southern Miss
Best Pass Rusher	C.J. Wilson, DE	East Carolina
Best Cover Corner	Brandon Brinkley	Houston
Special Teams Demon	Martez Smith	Southern Miss

HOUSTON COUGARS

NATIONAL RANK 34

C-USA rank: 1 | Record: 8-5 | C-USA record: 6-2 (3rd, West) | Stadium: John O'Quinn Field at Robertson Stadium (32,000)

Cougars in A Box

COACH: Kevin Sumlin — At Houston and overall: 8-5, 1 year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dana Holgorsen
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: John Skladany
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2006
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2004
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 8 offense, 5 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Case Keenum, RB Bryce Beall, WR Tyron Carrier, WR Patrick Edwards, LB Marcus McGraw, DE Tyrell Graham, DT David Hunter, FS Jacky Candy
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Offense, and plenty of it. The Cougars can throw the ball, with Keenum targeting sprinters like Carrier and Edwards, but they aren't one-dimensional by any means. Beall gives the Cougars a running game, and he has a big, veteran line to bulldoze a path.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The defense needs to find playmakers on the line. McGraw is the real deal at linebacker and Graham has potential at rush end, but there are several question marks here. Junior college transfers are going to have to help.

OFFENSE

The Cougars return most of the biggest pieces from their "Grand Slam" offense of last year — 5,000-yard quarterback Case Keenum, 1,000-yard running back Bryce Beall and 1,000-yard wide receiver Tyron Carrier.

Had he not broken a leg in the season's eighth game, wide receiver Patrick Edwards might have finished with over 1,000 receiving yards as well.

Keenum threw for 5,020 yards and 44 touchdowns in his first season in the offense designed by coach Kevin Sumlin and coordinator Dana Holgorsen. He earned C-USA Offensive Player of the Year honors as a result.

Keenum has plenty of speedy help on the outside, with 4.4-second threats like Carrier (80 receptions, 1,026 yards, nine TDs), Edwards and redshirt freshman Isaiah Sweeney. If L.J. Castile realizes his vast potential, he will give the offense the big, physical receiver it lacks.

The Cougars lose Keenum's top option in tight end Mark Hafner, but the Cougars might pick up a little more speed by going with Chaz Rodriguez.

Beall was the biggest surprise last season. He barely touched the ball in the first three games, then finished with a freshman school-record 1,247 yards and 13 touchdowns, averaging 6.3 yards per carry. He also carried away the C-USA Freshman of the Year award.

The line got two important junior college transfers – tackle Roy Watts and guard Jarve Dean.

DEFENSE

Five starters return from a defense that allowed plenty of points and yards, but showed a knack for making key stops.

Linebacker Marcus McGraw, the MVP of the Armed Forces Bowl victory over Air Force, is one of C-USA's most exciting young talents. McGraw proved to be exactly Sumlin's kind of player on defense — a speedy, intelligent playmaker, finishing with a team-high 103 tackles.

Senior linebacker Matt Nicholson has made remarkable progress from knee surgery and should be back in the lineup.

Sumlin bolstered the secondary by landing a pair of quality junior college transfers — safety Jacky Candy and cornerback Devin Mays. Candy is a hard-hitter and Mays, who has excellent speed, will be the Cougars' much-needed cover corner.

The front four will be an issue. Losing Phillip Hunt, C-USA's Defensive Player of the Year, will be softened somewhat by the improvement of former linebacker Tyrell Graham, though he is still learning the ropes at rush end. The other end will be a work in progress.

At tackle, sophomore David Hunter has promise, but Isaiah Thompson has been inconsistent.

SPECIAL TEAMS

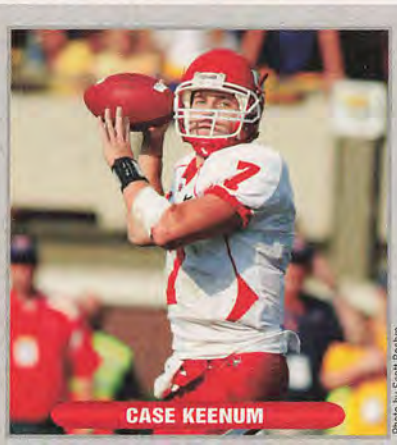
Veteran kicker Ben Bell underwent offseason hip surgery, so he is a question mark. Sophomore Jordan Mannisto, who got off only three attempts last season, most likely will handle the kicking chores at the start.

One of the more pleasant surprises from last season was the punting of Chase Turner, who averaged 45.5 yards per attempt.

Carrier injected a bit of oomph into the return game, giving the Cougars a legitimate take-it-to-the-house threat.

OVERVIEW

The Cougars are the West Division favorites and should be favored to win the C-USA title. Nonconference games against Oklahoma State, Texas Tech and Mississippi State will certainly expose any weaknesses, but C-USA play is all that truly matters. The offense is going to do its thing, so if the defense comes through, this could be a special season.



CASE KEENUM

Photo by Scott Boehm

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Case Keenum***	**6-2**	**210**	**Jr.**
	Cotton Turner	6-0	190	Fr.
RB	**Bryce Beall***	**5-11**	**205**	**So.**
	Chris Wilson	6-0	210	Fr.
WR	**Tyron Carrier***	**5-8**	**162**	**So.**
	Ronnie Williams	5-11	180	Fr.
WR	**Patrick Edwards***	**5-9**	**175**	**So.**
	L.J. Castile	6-3	210	Jr.
WR	**Chaz Rodriguez***	**6-2**	**185**	**Sr.**
	Tim Monroe	6-2	185	Sr.
WR	Kierrie Johnson	5-10	175	Jr.
	E.J. Smith	6-1	185	So.
LT	Jacolby Ashworth	6-3	275	Fr.
	Ari Tatum	6-5	240	Fr.
LG	**Jordan Shoemaker***	**6-3**	**270**	**Jr.**
	Jarve Dean	6-3	325	Jr.
C	**Carl Barnett***	**6-2**	**285**	**Sr.**
	Blake Sargent	6-3	275	Fr.
RG	**Chris Thompson***	**6-2**	**295**	**So.**
	Ken Van Heule	6-4	265	Fr.
RT	Roy Watts	6-6	300	Jr.
	Matt Hart	6-6	310	Sr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Michael Ray	6-3	250	So.
	Brandon Hartson	6-4	260	Fr.
DT	**Isaiah Thompson***	**6-4**	**285**	**Jr.**
	Doug Winfield	6-1	260	So.
DT	David Hunter	6-2	285	So.
	Demarcus Lattier	6-2	265	So.
DE	Tyrell Graham	6-3	225	Sr.
	Zeke Riser	6-4	237	Fr.
LB	**Matt Nicholson***	**6-3**	**225**	**Sr.**
	C.J. Cavness	6-1	220	Sr.
LB	Nicholas Thurston	6-1	255	Sr.
	Anthony Lewis	6-1	215	Fr.
LB	**Marcus McGraw***	**5-11**	**220**	**So.**
	Ryan Tennison	5-11	215	So.
CB	**Brandon Brinkley***	**6-0**	**180**	**Sr.**
	Loyce Means*	**5-10**	**175**	**Jr.**
CB	Devin Mays	5-11	170	Jr.
	Carson Blackmon	5-11	185	Sr.
SS	Nick Saenz	5-11	185	So.
	Roisean Haynes	5-11	185	So.
FS	Jacky Candy	5-11	205	Jr.
	Jackie Hinton Jr.	5-11	187	Fr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Ben Bell***	**6-0**	**175**	**Sr.**
P	**Chase Turner***	**6-4**	**229**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	NORTHWESTERN STATE
Sept. 12	at Oklahoma State
Sept. 26	TEXAS TECH
Oct. 3	at UTEP
Oct. 10	at Mississippi State
Oct. 17	at Tulane
Oct. 24	SMU
Oct. 31	SOUTHERN MISS
Nov. 7	at Tulsa
Nov. 14	at UCF
Nov. 21	MEMPHIS
Nov. 28	RICE

2008 Results

(8-5, 6-2)

W	SOUTHERN	55-3
L	at Oklahoma State	37-56
L	AIR FORCE (Dallas)	28-31
L	at Colorado State	25-28
W	at East Carolina	41-24
W	UAB	45-20
W	at SMU	44-38
L	at Marshall	23-37
W	TULANE	42-14
W	TULSA	70-30
W	UTEP	42-37
L	at Rice	42-56
	Armed Forces Bowl	
W	vs. Air Force	34-28

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	40.6	10
Rushing	161.2	47
Passing	401.6	2
Total	562.8	2
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	30.9	91
Rushing	175.2	94
Passing	238.3	91
Total	413.5	100
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 6	- 0.46	88

SOUTHERN MISS. GOLDEN EAGLES

NATIONAL RANK 40

C-USA rank: 2 | Record: 7-6 | C-USA record: 4-4 (T-2nd, East) | Stadium: M.M. Roberts Stadium (33,000)

Golden Eagles in A Box

COACH: Larry Fedora — At Southern Miss and overall: 7-6, 1 year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Darrell Wyatt
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Todd Bradford
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2003
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2001
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 8 offense, 8 defense
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Austin Davis, RB Damion Fletcher, WR DeAndre Brown, NT Anthony Gray, LB Martez Smith, FS Eddie Hicks, CB C.J. Bailey
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: A potentially explosive offense as Fedora, a successful offensive coordinator at Oklahoma State and Florida, welcomes back 3,000-yard passer Davis, 1,000-yard runner Fletcher and 1,000-yard wide receiver Brown.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Golden Eagles took a serious hit at linebacker. They lost Gerald McRath to the NFL a year early. Linebacker Tokumbo Abanikanda, the team's No. 2 tackler behind McRath, completed his eligibility.

OFFENSE

The Golden Eagles return four starters on the line, a 1,000-yard rusher, a 1,000-yard receiver and a quarterback who shattered the school's freshman passing records last season.

The combination helped USM establish a single-season record with 5,636 yards of total offense.

And now everyone is really on the same page in coach Larry Fedora's second season.

Senior running back Damion Fletcher led C-USA with 1,313 rushing yards, his third straight 1,000-yard season. Fletcher, the program's career rushing leader, likely will break Sammy Winder's school touchdown record (39) early in the season.

Fletcher has scored 36 touchdowns and is the reason the spread offense flourished in Fedora's rookie season. He was suspended for spring workouts, and spent the spring doing what he needed to do to get back into his coach's good graces.

Sophomore DeAndre Brown led all freshmen in receiving with 1,117 yards, while scoring 12 touchdowns. Considered the nation's top receiving prospect and the prize of Fedora's first recruiting class, the only thing that stopped Brown last season was a broken leg in the bowl game.

He missed spring ball but is on schedule for a healthy return.

The Eagles have good depth at receiver, including returning starter Gerald Baptiste, who caught 35 passes for 460 yards last year. Redshirt freshman Quentin Pierce showed signs of being a playmaker in the spring.

Sophomore quarterback Austin Davis broke the school's freshman passing records, throwing for 3,128 yards and 23 touchdowns. He had eight interceptions.

Back on the offensive line are Ryan Hebert, Cameron Zipp, Micah Brown and Kyle Burkhart.

DEFENSE

Linebacker Gerald McRath, a first-team all-league pick, left early for the NFL — he was a fourth-round pick — but eight starters are back, including each member of the secondary.

Free safety Eddie Hicks leads a defensive backfield that helped USM finish fifth in C-USA in pass defense. Hicks and strong safety Justin Wilson had four interceptions each.

Southern Miss ranked fourth in C-USA rushing defense and didn't allow an opponent to gain more than 100 yards in the final five games. Returning on the line are nose tackle Anthony Gray, a second-team all-league selection, and ends Deddrick Jones and Roshaad Byrd.

Redshirt freshman Willie Packer had a good spring — six tackles in the spring game — and should have a role at end in the fall.

Hard-hitting Martez Smith is the lone returnee at linebacker, but help should come from Hendrick Leverette, a transfer from Pearl River (Miss.) Community College, and sophomore Korey Williams.

SPECIAL TEAMS

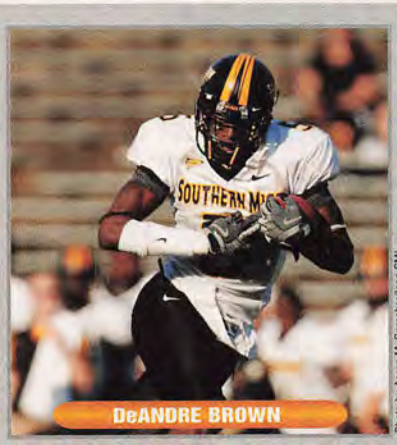
The Golden Eagles have to replace Britt Barefoot, who capably handled the kicking and punting.

Daniel Hrapmann made a bid for a starting job in the spring game by kicking a 35-yard winner as time expired. Hrapmann, a sophomore transfer from Southeastern Louisiana, and Justin Estes will battle at placekicker.

Freshman quarterback Bret Jefcoat might handle the punting duties. Jefcoat was a first-team all-state punter in high school.

OVERVIEW

The Golden Eagles are *Lindy's* pick to unseat East Carolina in the East. Southern Miss returns eight starters on both sides of the ball and will have two players — Fletcher and Brown — who are capable of winning the C-USA Offensive Player of the Year award.



DeANDRE BROWN

Photo by Aaron M. Sprecher/Icon SMI

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Austin Davis***	**6-2**	**206**	**So.**
	Martevious Young	6-1	188	Jr.
RB	**Damion Fletcher***	**5-10**	**177**	**Sr.**
	Tory Harrison	6-1	188	Sr.
WR	**DeAndre Brown***	**6-6**	**228**	**So.**
	Quentin Pierce	5-11	163	Fr.
WR	**Gerald Baptiste***	**6-0**	**182**	**Sr.**
	Jordan McNair	6-3	172	Fr.
WR	Freddie Parham	6-0	172	Sr.
	William Spight	5-10	167	So.
TE	Jonathan Massey	6-3	251	Jr.
	Leroy Banks	6-3	230	Sr.
RT	Calvin Wilson	6-6	353	Sr.
	Dyron White	6-5	309	Fr.
RG	**Ryan Hebert***	**6-5**	**310**	**Sr.**
	Alex Michael	6-2	310	Jr.
C	**Cameron Zipp***	**6-1**	**297**	**Jr.**
	Austin Quattrochi	6-3	270	Fr.
LG	**Micah Brown***	**6-2**	**287**	**Sr.**
	R.J. Brown	6-3	301	Sr.
LT	**Kyle Burkhart***	**6-5**	**275**	**Sr.**
	Trevor Newsom	6-8	276	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Deddrick Jones***	**6-3**	**242**	**So.**
	Willie Packer	6-1	275	Fr.
NT	**Anthony Gray***	**6-0**	**301**	**Jr.**
	Terrance Pope	6-3	275	So.
DT	Rolando Barragan	6-3	295	Sr.
	Logan Hickman	6-3	245	So.
DE	**Roshaad Byrd***	**6-3**	**247**	**Jr.**
	Cordarro Law	6-2	243	So.
LB	Ronnie Thornton	6-3	230	So.
	Tim Green	6-3	200	So.
LB	Korey Williams	6-2	228	So.
	Hendrick Leverette	5-10	221	Jr.
LB	**Martez Smith***	**6-0**	**211**	**Jr.**
	Brandon Davis	6-1	200	Sr.
CB	**Andre Watson***	**5-10**	**180**	**Sr.**
	Kevie Thompson	6-0	189	Jr.
CB	**C.J. Bailey***	**5-10**	**189**	**Jr.**
	Marcal Robinson	6-0	175	Fr.
SS	**Justin Wilson***	**5-11**	**187**	**Jr.**
	Chico Hunter	6-0	195	Jr.
FS	**Eddie Hicks***	**6-2**	**183**	**Sr.**
	Kendrick Presley	6-2	188	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Daniel Hrapmann	5-9	152	So.
P	Bret Jefcoat	6-1	200	Fr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	ALCORN STATE
Sept. 12	UCF
Sept. 19	VIRGINIA
Sept. 26	at Kansas
Oct. 1	at UAB
Oct. 10	at Louisville
Oct. 17	MEMPHIS
Oct. 24	TULANE
Oct. 31	at Houston
Nov. 14	at Marshall
Nov. 21	TULSA
Nov. 28	at East Carolina

2008 Results

	(7-6, 4-4)	
W	LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE	51-21
L	at Auburn	13-27
W	at Arkansas State	27-24
L	MARSHALL	27-34
L	UTEP (OT)	37-40
L	BOISE STATE	7-24
L	at Rice	40-45
L	at Memphis	30-36
W	UAB	70-14
W	at UCF	17-6
W	EAST CAROLINA	21-3
W	at SMU	28-12
	New Orleans Bowl	
W	vs. Troy (OT)	30-27

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	30.6	31
Rushing	192.5	24
Passing	241.1	40
Total	433.5	20
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.1	54
Rushing	139.8	58
Passing	226.3	85
Total	366.1	65
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 13	+ 1.00	10

EAST CAROLINA PIRATES

NATIONAL RANK 53

C-USA rank: 3 | Record: 9-5 | C-USA record: 6-2 (1st, East) | Stadium: Dowdy-Ficklen (43,000)

Pirates in A Box

COACH: Skip Holtz — At ECU: 29-22, 4 years; overall: 63-45, 9 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Steve Shankweiler
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Greg Hudson
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2008
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2006
RETURNING STARTERS: 18; 8 offense, 8 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Patrick Pinkney, WR Dwayne Harris, LB Nick Johnson, DE C.J. Wilson, LB Jeremy Chambliss, DT Linval Joseph, FS Van Eskridge, SS Derek Blacknall
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The defense bailed out the team last season when the offense struggled, as it was able to come up with 33 turnovers. Pinkney's experience at quarterback will be a plus, as will depth at receiver. The kicking game is sound. Last season's upsets (Virginia Tech, West Virginia) are still confidence boosters.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The running game could use a breakout star and has personnel issues to sort out. ECU's return games need upgrading. Tough road games await early (West Virginia, North Carolina).

OFFENSE

Coach Skip Holtz will get more mileage out of quarterback Patrick Pinkney.

The NCAA gave Pinkney a sixth year of eligibility because he missed the 2005 season recovering from shoulder problems after redshirting in 2004. Pinkney started 13 of 14 games last season, throwing only seven interceptions in 363 attempts.

Pinkney should be in line for even bigger things this season, helped by the return of a pair of playmaking wide receivers in Darryl Freeney and Dwayne Harris, who had 654 yards on 58 catches last season. Freeney was third in receiving yards with 352. He had five catches for 112 yards against Kentucky.

Alex Taylor, Jamar Bryant and Joe Womack return after being key contributors in the receiver rotation last season.

The running back depth chart is a bit in flux. Jonathan Williams should be ECU's featured running back, but his legal issues forced Holtz to suspend him at midseason. Unless Williams' legal issues are cleared and team conditions are met, he won't play in the fall.

Norman Whitley, the Pirates' leading rusher last season, was on a leave of absence this spring, but could return, Holtz said.

Meanwhile, Kentucky transfer Brandon Jackson could figure prominently in the running game. ECU potentially has a stacked backfield.

DEFENSE

The defense has made monumental strides as it gave up only 21.1 points and 330 yards per game, down from averages of 30 points and 431 yards in 2007. Much of the unit's improvement is due to speed and depth, and eight returning starters should make the Pirates even tougher.

Middle linebacker Nick Johnson was ECU's leading tackler last season, and he picked off two passes.

ECU will miss second-leading tackler Pierre Bell, but Jeremy Chambliss and Chris Mattocks should man the outside linebacker positions in Holtz's 4-3 base scheme. Mattocks played in both the secondary and at linebacker last season, while Chambliss was a consistent contributor with 60 tackles.

On the line, end C.J. Wilson led the Pirates in tackles for loss with 18.5, including 10.5 sacks.

ECU's secondary could be as good as any in C-USA with two-year starting free safety Van Eskrdige returning to lead the unit. He had four of the Pirates' 22 interceptions last year, while finishing third in tackles with 97.

Derek Blacknall is set to join Eskridge at the other safety spot, while juniors Dekota Marshall and Travis Simmons could make their presence felt on the corners.

SPECIAL TEAMS

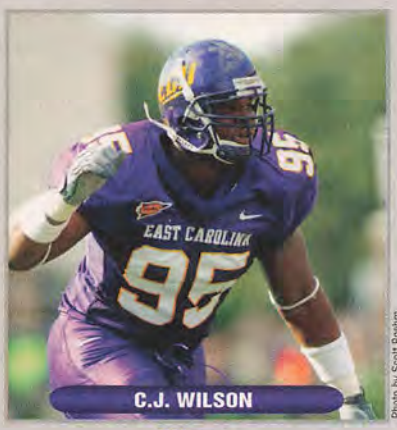
Matt Dodge returns at punter after averaging 43.9 yards per kick, 14th in the nation, last season. Ben Hartman, who made eight of his last nine field goal attempts, will return as the placekicker.

Holtz will look to shore up his return units; ECU barely averaged over 20 yards per kick-off return and only 9.2 yards per punt return. Multiple skill position personnel will compete in the fall.

OVERVIEW

Depth and experience will be two major keys as 18 starters return and the roster features large junior and senior classes. The defense improved in many areas last season, posting C-USA bests in scoring defense, total defense and red zone defense.

With that defense and Pinkney back at quarterback, and a big-game mentality, ECU is in great position to defend its conference title.



C.J. WILSON

Photo by Scott Boehm

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Patrick Pinkney***	**6-0**	**198**	**Sr.**
	Rob Kass	6-4	250	Jr.
RB	Brandon Jackson	5-10	195	So.
	Jonathan Williams	6-1	196	Jr.
WR	Joe Womack	6-1	195	So.
	Jamar Bryant	6-2	208	Sr.
WR	**Dwayne Harris***	**6-0**	**198**	**Jr.**
	Michael Bowman	5-9	165	So.
WR	Darryl Freeney	5-11	196	So.
	Alex Taylor*	**6-4**	**210**	**Sr.**
WR	Reyn Willis	6-3	215	Sr.
	(TE) Kevin Gidrey*	**6-2**	**260**	**Jr.**
LT	Steven Baker	6-8	315	So.
	Travis Melvin	6-6	291	Jr.
LG	**Cory Dowless***	**6-5**	**287**	**Jr.**
	Doug Polochak	6-4	284	Jr.
C	**Sean Allen***	**6-3**	**307**	**Sr.**
	Daulton Faulds	6-3	285	Fr.
RG	**Terence Campbell***	**6-5**	**320**	**Sr.**
	Stephen Heis	6-5	285	Sr.
RT	**D.J. Scott***	**6-6**	**320**	**Jr.**
	Steven Baker	6-8	315	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	A.J. Johnson	6-2	256	Jr.
	Allen Crowder	6-2	260	Fr.
DT	**Jay Ross***	**6-3**	**306**	**Sr.**
	Josh Smith	6-1	240	Jr.
DT	**Linval Joseph***	**6-6**	**300**	**Jr.**
	Andrew Farr	6-4	285	Jr.
DE	**C.J. Wilson***	**6-4**	**271**	**Sr.**
	Maurice Mercer	6-5	259	So.
LB	**Jeremy Chambliss***	**6-0**	**235**	**Sr.**
	Matt Thompson	6-2	210	So.
LB	**Nick Johnson***	**6-1**	**215**	**Sr.**
	Dustin Lineback	5-11	229	Jr.
LB	Chris Mattocks	6-0	210	Sr.
	Lorenzo Osborne	6-3	202	Jr.
CB	**Dekota Marshall***	**6-1**	**195**	**Jr.**
	Emanuel Davis	5-11	190	So.
CB	**Travis Simmons***	**5-10**	**179**	**Jr.**
	Leonard Paulk	5-11	180	Fr.
SS	Derek Blacknall	5-11	190	So.
	Levin Neal	5-11	192	Sr.
FS	**Van Eskridge***	**6-0**	**200**	**Sr.**
	Julian Carter	6-2	191	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Ben Hartman***	**5-11**	**210**	**Sr.**
P	**Matt Dodge***	**6-2**	**220**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	APPALACHIAN STATE
Sept. 12	at West Virginia
Sept. 19	at North Carolina
Sept. 26	UCF
Oct. 3	at Marshall
Oct. 10	at SMU
Oct. 17	RICE
Oct. 27	at Memphis
Nov. 5	VIRGINIA TECH
Nov. 15	at Tulsa
Nov. 21	UAB
Nov. 28	SOUTHERN MISS

2008 Results

	(9-5, 6-2)	
W	vs. Virginia Tech (Charlotte)	27-22
W	WEST VIRGINIA	24-3
W	at Tulane	28-24
L	at NC State (OT)	24-30
L	HOUSTON	24-41
L	at Virginia	20-35
W	MEMPHIS	30-10
W	at UCF (OT)	13-10
W	MARSHALL (OT)	19-16
L	at Southern Miss	3-21
W	at UAB	17-13
W	UTEP	53-21
	C-USA Championship Game	
W	at Tulsa	27-24
	Liberty Bowl	
L	vs. Kentucky	19-25

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	23.4	81
Rushing	126.4	84
Passing	214.0	60
Total	340.4	79
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	21.1	30
Rushing	135.8	48
Passing	197.2	46
Total	333.0	41
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 5	+ 0.36	38

TULSA GOLDEN HURRICANE

NATIONAL RANK 58

C-USA rank: 4 | Record: 11-3 | C-USA record: 7-1 (T-1st, West) | Stadium: Skelly Field at H.A. Chapman Stadium: (30,000)

Golden Hurricane in A Box

COACH: Todd Graham — At Tulsa: 21-7, 2 years; overall: 28-13, 3 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Herb Hand
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Keith Patterson
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2005
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2004
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 6 offense, 7 defense, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: KR/WR Damaris Johnson, WR Trae Johnson, OT Tyler Holmes, LB Mike Bryan, NG/DE Wilson Garrison, CB Kenny D. Sims
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: A returning corps of wide receivers and a starting running back should ease the transition for the new quarterback. A favorable late-season schedule should help the Hurricanes finish strong.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Not only will the signal-caller be new, the Golden Hurricane has a different play-caller in offensive coordinator Herb Hand. Tulsa plays four of its first five games on the road, and does not play a home game until Sept. 26. Non-conference games loom against Oklahoma and Boise State.

OFFENSE

Tulsa has moved the football better than most, and returns six starters, including receivers Damaris Johnson, Trae Johnson and Slick Shelley to try to do it again.

The Golden Hurricane led the nation in total offense the past two seasons, and set a school record with 7,978 yards for a 569.9 per-game average a year ago.

The bad news: Tulsa will be retooling at quarterback.

Jacob Bower, G.J. Kinne and Shavodrick Beaver will be trying to fill the shoes of record-setting passer David Johnson. Bower saw very limited action last year, attempting only 15 passes. Coach Todd Graham said all three would compete for the job in the preseason after nobody emerged through spring drills.

Receivers Damaris Johnson, Trae Johnson and Shelley should help the quarterback transition after combining for 116 catches and 21 touchdowns for the GMAC Bowl champions.

Damaris Johnson led the club with 53 receptions for 743 yards and 10 touchdowns, while Trae Johnson set the school record for freshmen with 1,088 receiving yards and 13 scores en route to Freshman All-America honors in 2007.

Charles Clay returns at running back. The versatile back has 1,488 receiving yards and 449 rushing yards in his play-making career.

Tulsa scored a school-record 661 points last year, while averaging 47.2 points per game to rank second in the nation.

DEFENSE

A weak spot in key games last year, Tulsa needs its defense to step up in a big way in 2009.

With only nine interceptions, TU was 84th nationally in turnover ratio, and ended up 97th in passing defense, allowing almost 250 yards per game.

Eight starters return. Leading the way is linebacker Mike Bryan, the team leader with 119 tackles in his first year as a starter. Fellow linebacker Tanner Antle showed flashes of brilliance, but, like most of the defense as whole, must be more consistent.

Safety James Lockett was a second-team All-C-USA pick after leading Tulsa with 16.5 tackles for loss. Tulsa will count on returning starter and senior free safety Charles Davis to head up the pass defense, which always gets a test in Conference USA.

Cornerback Kenny D. Sims and nose guard Wilson Garrison both garnered honorable mention All-C-USA recognition. Sims led Tulsa with eight pass break-ups, while Garrison had 53 stops and also started nine games at defensive end in 2008.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Tulsa returns punter Michael Such, an honorable mention All-C-USA selection in 2008 after averaging 43 yards per attempt.

Matt Hulse and Kevin Fitzpatrick will vie to replace kicker Jarod Tracy. Fitzpatrick was 1 of 2 on field goals — with a long of 41 — and converted all eight PAT tries.

Damaris Johnson is dangerous on kick and punt returns. He averaged 25.6 yards per kickoff return. The Hurricane was among the worst coverage teams in the country, allowing three kickoff returns for scores.

OVERVIEW

Tulsa set a school record for wins in a season with an 11-3 record, marking the first time in school history that the Hurricane posted back-to-back seasons of double-digit victories. Making it three in a row with a new quarterback, however, is too much to ask, although Tulsa gets home games against Houston and East Carolina — teams that defeated the Hurricanes last year.

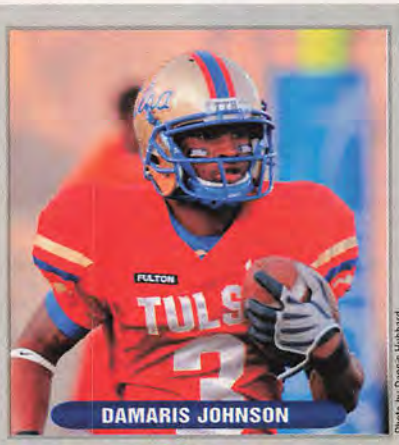


Photo by Dennis Hubbard

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Jacob Bower	6-3	233	Jr.
	G.J. Kinne	6-2	215	So.
RB	Jamad Williams	5-9	212	Jr.
	Charles Opeseyitan	5-10	205	So.
RB	**Charles Clay***	**6-3**	**230**	**Jr.**
	Willie Carter	6-2	206	Fr.
WR	Slick Shelley	6-4	200	Sr.
	Jesse Meyer*	**6-4**	**203**	**Sr.**
WR	**Trae Johnson***	**5-11**	**180**	**Jr.**
	Chris Ford	6-2	189	So.
WR	**Damaris Johnson***	**5-8**	**170**	**So.**
	A.J. Whitmore	5-9	172	Jr.
LT	**Tyler Holmes***	**6-3**	**306**	**So.**
	Jared Grigg	6-4	265	Fr.
LG	**Curt Puckett***	**6-4**	**309**	**Sr.**
	Derrick Jackson	6-2	260	Fr.
C	Clint Anderson	6-2	272	So.
	Jon Bell	6-2	274	Jr.
RG	Nick Gates	6-2	270	So.
	Gabe Moyer	6-2	311	Fr.
RT	Brandon Thomas	6-5	274	So.
	Aaron Ringle	6-4	265	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Odrick Ray	6-3	261	Jr.
	Maurice White	6-6	246	Fr.
NG	**Wilson Garrison***	**6-4**	**283**	**Sr.**
	Wayne Thompson	6-0	285	Fr.
DE	Cory Dorris	6-4	255	Fr.
	Un'Tavious Scott	6-3	245	Sr.
LB	**George Clinkscale***	**6-0**	**238**	**Sr.**
	Curnelius Arnick	6-1	230	So.
LB	**Mike Bryan***	**6-3**	**226**	**Sr.**
	Kenny R. Sims	6-0	210	Jr.
LB	**Tanner Antle***	**6-4**	**225**	**Jr.**
	Curnelius Arnick	6-1	230	So.
CB	John Destin	6-0	195	Sr.
	John Flanders	5-10	170	So.
CB	**Kenny D. Sims***	**5-11**	**197**	**Sr.**
	Reid Singleton	5-10	175	So.
S	DeAundre Brown	5-11	195	So.
	Bryan Burnham	6-2	199	Fr.
S	**James Lockett***	**5-11**	**203**	**Sr.**
	Ade' Manga	6-2	215	Sr.
FS	**Charles Davis***	**5-9**	**180**	**Sr.**
	Trent Wilkins	5-11	198	Fr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Matt Hulse	5-11	88	So.
P	**Michael Such***	**6-2**	**198**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 4	at Tulane
Sept. 12	at New Mexico
Sept. 19	at Oklahoma
Sept. 26	SAM HOUSTON STATE
Oct. 3	at Rice
Oct. 14	BOISE STATE
Oct. 21	at UTEP
Oct. 31	SMU
Nov. 7	HOUSTON
Nov. 15	EAST CAROLINA
Nov. 21	at Southern Miss
Nov. 27	MEMPHIS

2008 Results

	(11-3, 7-1)	
W	at UAB	45-22
W	at North Texas	56-26
W	NEW MEXICO	56-14
W	CENTRAL ARKANSAS	62-34
W	RICE	63-28
W	at SMU	37-31
W	UTEP	77-35
W	UCF	49-19
L	at Arkansas	23-30
L	at Houston	30-70
W	TULANE	56-7
W	at Marshall	38-35
	C-USA Championship Game	
L	EAST CAROLINA	24-27
	GMAC Bowl	
W	vs. Ball State	45-13

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	47.2	2
Rushing	268.0	5
Passing	301.8	9
Total	569.9	1
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	27.9	75
Rushing	129.5	37
Passing	249.6	97
Total	379.1	74
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 5	- 0.36	84

MEMPHIS TIGERS

NATIONAL RANK 61

C-USA rank: 5 | Record: 6-7 | C-USA record: 4-4 (T-2nd, East) | Stadium: Liberty Bowl Memorial (62,380)

Tigers in A Box

COACH: Tommy West — At Memphis: 47-51, 8 years; overall: 82-86, 14 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Clay Helton
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kenny Ingram
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1971, Missouri Valley
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2006
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 4 offense, 7 defense, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Arkelon Hall, RB Curtis Steele, WR Duke Calhoun, WR Carlos Singleton, LB Greg Jackson, FS Alton Starr, CB D.A. Griffin, CB Deante Lamar
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The offense could be one of the more balanced attacks in C-USA. Memphis returns Steele, a 1,000-yard rusher, and two of the program's all-time leading receivers in Calhoun and Singleton.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: There's uncertainty in two key areas. The Tigers had to replace four starters on the offensive line, which had a lackluster showing in the spring game. And the secondary needs to become more efficient to complement a solid front seven.

OFFENSE

The Tigers return only four starters, but among those are quarterback Arkelon Hall, running back Curtis Steele and receiver Carlos Singleton.

Hall started in 2008, his first season after transferring from a California junior college, and should be much more effective running the Tigers' spread offense, especially if he follows through with his offseason pledge and operates 10 pounds lighter at 215.

He completed 191 of 335 passes for 2,275 yards, with 12 touchdowns and seven interceptions last season.

Steele, named the league's Newcomer of the Year, rushed for 1,223 yards last fall. He'll be backed by Wisconsin transfer Lance Smith, who is getting a second chance after having legal issues during his time with the Badgers. Smith had an impressive spring and his acceleration will be a factor in what could be the league's best rushing attack.

Where the Tigers could really flourish offensively is at receiver.

For the first time in their careers, seniors Carlos Singleton and Duke Calhoun will be on the field at the same time. Singleton and Calhoun — who should finish as the school's top two all-time pass catchers — had been sharing one of the outside receiver spots.

Singleton is a go-up-and-get-it 6-8 receiver with 19 career touchdown receptions. Calhoun has 144 career catches for 2,058 yards.

They'll be joined by spring game offensive MVP Marcus Rucker and speedy sophomore slot receiver Cam Baker.

DEFENSE

If the defense is to continue making strides, much of the improvement will come from the input of several talented transfers.

Redshirt freshman defensive back DeRon Furr, who signed originally with Auburn, was the defensive MVP of the spring game and is poised to become a playmaking safety.

Linebackers Jamon Hughes (Mississippi State) and Derrick Odom (LSU) will be factors, too, at a position group that returns three starters, including Greg Jackson.

Defensive tackle Justin Thompson was one of the nation's best junior college line prospects a year after signing with Oregon. Thompson made several big plays this spring for Memphis.

New coordinator Kenny Ingram's priority will be a secondary that must step up for the Tigers to survive in pass-happy C-USA.

Free safety Furr should be a solid starter; Alton Starr is a veteran returning safety; and D.A. Griffin is a strong cover corner.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Veteran kicker Matt Reagan returns, but it might be in a new role.

Reagan, during an injury-interrupted junior season, was 8 of 11 on field goals, including 2 of 3 from 40 to 49 yards.

He could take over the punting duties from departed Brent Sutherland, leaving the kicking duties to either strong-legged freshman Paulo Henriques or walk-on Vinny Zaccario, who went 6 of 8 in Reagan's absence last season.

OVERVIEW

Memphis has recovered from slow starts each of the past two years to earn bowl trips. The Tigers need to start fast and finish strong to do what they haven't done in 13 years in C-USA. While winning a division title is possible with the talent coach Tommy West has assembled, East Carolina and Southern Miss will provide difficult obstacles in the East.

CURTIS STEELE

Photo by Joe Murphy/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Arkelon Hall***	**6-3**	**225**	**Sr.**
	Tyler Bass	6-3	220	So.
RB	**Curtis Steele***	**6-0**	**185**	**Sr.**
	Lance Smith	5-10	208	Jr.
WR	Duke Calhoun	6-4	200	Sr.
	Jermaine McKenzie	6-3	180	So.
WR	Cam Baker	6-0	170	So.
	Brian Hall	5-11	190	Sr.
WR	**Carlos Singleton***	**6-8**	**220**	**Sr.**
	Marcus Rucker	6-3	180	Fr.
TE	Deven Onarheim	6-7	255	Jr.
	DajLeon Farr	6-5	252	Sr.
RT	Ronald Leary	6-4	313	So.
	Maurice Holloway	6-7	300	Fr.
RG	**Dominik Riley***	**6-4**	**315**	**Jr.**
	Malcom Rawls	6-5	315	Sr.
C	Brad Paul	6-3	290	Jr.
	Robbie Hardie	6-4	290	So.
LG	Joel McCloud	6-3	310	So.
	Michael Antonescu	6-4	290	So.
LT	Lionel Henderson	6-4	275	So.
	Kindly Jacques	6-7	325	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
LE	Greg Terrell	6-4	255	Sr.
	Demetrius Culpepper	6-5	245	Sr.
NT	Tim McGee	6-4	300	Jr.
	Charlie Bryant	6-6	300	Jr.
DT	Steven Turner	6-3	270	Sr.
	Justin Thompson	6-4	290	Jr.
RE	**Jada Brown***	**6-2**	**265**	**Jr.**
	Josh Weaver	6-3	220	Sr.
LB	**Jeremy Longstreet***	**6-1**	**205**	**Jr.**
	Jamon Hughes	6-0	230	Jr.
LB	**Winston Bowens***	**6-0**	**250**	**Jr.**
	Jeremy Rockette	6-3	225	Sr.
LB	**Greg Jackson***	**6-2**	**212**	**Sr.**
	Derrick Odom	6-2	202	Jr.
CB	**Deante' Lamar***	**5-9**	**180**	**Sr.**
	Lavaris Edwards	5-10	185	So.
CB	**D.A. Griffin***	**5-11**	**185**	**Sr.**
	Torenzo Quinn	5-11	183	Jr.
SS	**Alton Starr***	**6-0**	**195**	**Sr.**
	Darius Davis	6-0	190	Jr.
FS	DeRon Furr	6-3	210	Fr.
	Curtis Echlos	6-3	190	Jr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Matt Reagan ***	**6-1**	**210**	**Sr.**
P	Matt Reagan	6-1	210	Sr.

*** Returning Starters in Bold**

2009 Schedule

Sept. 6	OLE MISS
Sept. 12	at Middle Tennessee
Sept. 19	TENNESSEE-MARTIN
Sept. 26	MARSHALL
Oct. 3	at UCF
Oct. 10	UTEP
Oct. 17	at Southern Miss
Oct. 27	EAST CAROLINA
Nov. 7	at Tennessee
Nov. 14	UAB
Nov. 21	at Houston
Nov. 27	at Tulsa

2008 Results

	(6-7, 4-4)	
L	at Mississippi	24-41
L	RICE	35-42
L	at Marshall	16-17
W	NICHOLLS STATE	31-10
W	ARKANSAS STATE	29-17
W	at UAB	33-30
L	LOUISVILLE	28-35
L	at East Carolina	10-30
W	SOUTHERN MISS	36-30
W	at SMU	31-26
L	UCF	21-28
W	TULANE	45-6
	St. Petersburg Bowl	
L	vs. South Florida	14-41

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.2	48
Rushing	194.9	22
Passing	222.4	51
Total	417.2	26
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	27.2	68
Rushing	152.9	76
Passing	200.9	52
Total	353.8	57
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 1	+ 0.08	55

MARSHALL THUNDERING HERD

NATIONAL RANK 80

C-USA rank: 6 | Record: 4-8 | C-USA record: 3-5 (T-4th, East) | Stadium: Joan C. Edwards Stadium (38,016)

Thundering Herd in A Box

COACH: Mark Snyder — At Marshall and overall: 16-31, 4 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: John Shannon
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Rick Minter
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2002, MAC
LAST BOWL: 2004, Fort Worth
RETURNING STARTERS: 17; 7 offense, 8 defense, punter, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Darius Marshall, TE Cody Slate, QB Brian Anderson, DE Albert McClellan, LB Mario Harvey, LB Brandon Burns, CB DeQuan Bembry, CB T.J. Drakeford
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Marshall's running game should flourish with namesake Darius Marshall as the featured back. Bembry and Drakeford are a pair of playmakers on the corners, while McClellan should be able to bring the heat in the pass rush.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Anderson won the job in the spring, but the Herd has a lot to prove at quarterback. Sustaining drives will be important; opponents ran 149 more offensive plays than MU a year ago. Replacing MLB Maurice Kitchens won't be easy. There is little experience at wideout.

OFFENSE

Quarterback Mark Cann had an inconsistent freshman year, finishing with 1,767 passing yards in 11 games. His production dropped as the season played out, and he completed only 30 of 70 passes for 252 yards in his final three games.

Injuries forced Cann to the sideline in the season finale against Tulsa, where Brian Anderson came up with a 14-of-19 effort for 177 yards and three touchdowns. Anderson's output in the spring moved him past Cann and junior college transfers Press Taylor and Jacob Laudenslayer.

Senior tight end Cody Slate's 40 catches were his career low for a season. Slate, who caught 66 passes in 2007, will be a renewed focal point in the passing game as Darius Passmore, the leading receiver, graduated.

Depth is plentiful at wideout, although there is little experience.

Bryant Milligan, who caught 17 passes for 144 yards, is the leading returnee. Junior college prospect Wayne Bonner should fit into the mix as he runs a 4.5 40 and caught seven touchdown passes for East Mississippi Community College last year.

Running back Darius Marshall was the strongest point of the offense last season, rushing for 1,095 yards, but he had only one touchdown in the team's last eight games. Terrell Edwards, who saw spot assignments as a freshman, has a power running style.

Redshirt freshmen Martin Ward and Jordan Taylor could come in and make their presence felt immediately at running back.

Tackles C.J. Wood and Ryan Tillman each started 12 games as freshmen. Marshall allowed only 13 sacks in '08, best in the league.

DEFENSE

Six opponents passed for more than 300 yards against the Herd last season. Five opponents rushed for more than 200 yards.

There is much work to do, but the unit had an excellent spring and it does have playmakers at every level. Eight starters and seven of the top 10 tacklers return, starting with All-C-USA defensive end Albert McClellan.

Three other starters return on the line, and depth is not a concern. Sophomore end John Youboty, brother of Buffalo Bills defensive back Ashton Youboty, showed well in spring practice.

Mario Harvey, the Thundering Herd's leading returning tackler, and Brandon Burns return at linebacker. Harvey had double figures in tackles in three games.

Marshall has a strong pair of sophomore corners in T.J. Drakeford and DeQuan Bembry, who had 80 tackles last season, including a team-high 7.5 tackles for loss.

Ashton Hall, Omar Brown and John Saunders will be prime candidates to move into vacant safety spots.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Darius Marshall will again be the kick return specialist after he averaged 26.3 yards per attempt last season. Ashton Hall will hold punt return chores.

Punter Kase Whitehead was efficient as a freshman, nailing 24 of his 63 punts inside the 20-yard line and forcing 27 fair catches. Craig Ratanamorn made 7 of 11 field goals, while Tyler Warner nailed three during Ratanamorn's absence with an injury.

OVERVIEW

Mark Snyder had his first full scholarship load in 2008 and played lots of underclassmen. There is enough talent — and now experience — on defense to see vast improvement. The Herd is going to continue to grow up. At least six victories and a bowl berth are possible.

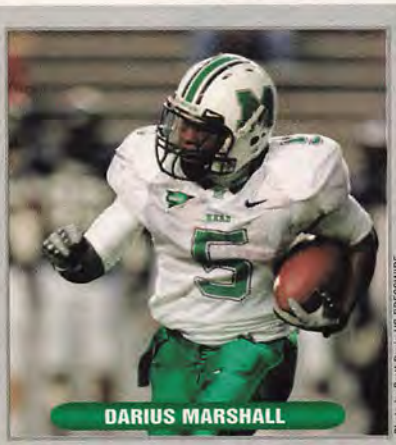

DARIUS MARSHALL

Photo by Brett Davis-US PRESSWIRE

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Brian Anderson	6-3	217	Jr.
	Mark Cann*	**6-4**	**238**	**So.**
RB	**Darius Marshall***	**5-10**	**189**	**Jr.**
	Terrell Edwards	6-2	208	So.
WR	**Bryant Milligan***	**6-1**	**197**	**Jr.**
	Tavaris Tompson	6-2	198	Sr.
WR	Courtney Edmonson	6-0	187	Sr.
	Chuck Walker	5-10	177	Jr.
WR	Wayne Bonner	6-4	210	Jr.
	Antavious Wilson	6-0	180	Fr.
TE	**Cody Slate***	**6-4**	**220**	**Sr.**
	Lee Smith	6-6	258	Jr.
LT	**Ryan Tillman***	**6-5**	**282**	**So.**
	Brandon Campbell	6-5	310	Jr.
LG	**Chad Schofield***	**6-4**	**316**	**Jr.**
	Josh Evans	6-4	305	Jr.
C	John Bruhin	6-5	303	So.
	Chad Schofield	6-4	316	Jr.
RG	Jimmy Rogers	6-4	302	Sr.
	Landis Provancha	6-5	305	Sr.
RT	Daniel Baldridge	6-9	310	Sr.
	C.J. Wood*	**6-5**	**288**	**So.**

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Albert McClellan***	**6-2**	**252**	**Sr.**
	John Jacobs	6-3	241	Sr.
DT	**Delvin Johnson***	**6-3**	**296**	**Jr.**
	James Burkes	6-1	303	Sr.
DT	**Johnny Jones***	**6-5**	**288**	**Jr.**
	Montel Glasco	6-3	295	Sr.
DE	**Michael Janac***	**6-4**	**278**	**Jr.**
	John Youboty	6-4	237	So.
LB	**Mario Harvey***	**6-0**	**244**	**Sr.**
	Corey Hart	6-2	222	Jr.
LB	Kellen Harris	6-3	223	So.
	Tyson Gale	6-3	222	So.
LB	**Brandon Burns***	**6-4**	**205**	**Sr.**
	Devin Arrington	6-2	186	Fr.
CB	**DeQuan Bembry***	**5-10**	**173**	**So.**
	D.J. Wingate	6-2	180	Jr.
CB	**T.J. Drakeford***	**5-11**	**184**	**So.**
	Zearrick Matthews	5-9	184	Sr.
SS	Ashton Hall	5-10	193	Sr.
	John Saunders	6-0	193	Sr.
FS	Omar Brown	5-10	178	So.
	Ahmed Shakoor	5-11	195	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Craig Ratanamorn***	**6-3**	**187**	**Sr.**
P	**Kase Whitehead***	**5-10**	**181**	**So.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	SOUTHERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 12	at Virginia Tech
Sept. 19	BOWLING GREEN
Sept. 26	at Memphis
Oct. 3	EAST CAROLINA
Oct. 10	at Tulane
Oct. 17	at West Virginia
Oct. 24	UAB
Nov. 1	at UCF
Nov. 14	SOUTHERN MISS
Nov. 21	SMU
Nov. 28	at UTEP

2008 Results

(4-8, 3-5)

W	ILLINOIS STATE	35-10
L	at Wisconsin	14-51
W	MEMPHIS	17-16
W	at Southern Miss	34-27
L	at West Virginia	3-27
L	CINCINNATI	10-33
L	at UAB	21-23
W	HOUSTON	37-23
L	at East Carolina (OT)	16-19
L	UCF	14-30
L	at Rice	10-35
L	TULSA	35-38

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	20.5	97
Rushing	157.8	50
Passing	172.7	95
Total	330.4	86
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	27.7	72
Rushing	164.4	85
Passing	253.7	100
Total	418.1	102
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 4	- 0.33	81

UTEP MINERS

NATIONAL RANK 84

C-USA rank: 7 | Record: 5-7 | C-USA record: 4-4 (3rd, West) | Stadium: Sun Bowl (51,500)

Miners in A Box

COACH: Mike Price — At UTEP: 30-30, 5 years; overall: 159-152, 27 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Bob Connelly, Aaron Price
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Osia Lewis
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2000, WAC
LAST BOWL: 2005, GMAC
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 8 offense, 6 defense, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Trevor Vittatoe, WR Jeff Moturi, WR Kris Adams, S Braxton Amy, S Da'Mon Cromartie-Smith, LB Roddray Walker, LB Royzell Smith
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: UTEP can throw with anyone. The key components from last year's passing game — Vittatoe, Adams, Moturi and four returning starters on the line — suggest more of the same after the Miners ranked 14th nationally in passing during the 2008 campaign.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The defense, ravaged by injuries a year ago, still has plenty of questions. Breaking in a new kicker could be tricky. The schedule is tough; UTEP plays six 2008 bowl teams in its first seven games.

OFFENSE

Offense won't be the problem for coach Mike Price's Miners. It never is.

Junior quarterback Trevor Vittatoe threw for a school-record 33 touchdowns last year, with 3,274 yards and just nine interceptions. Of those picks, three came in the season opener at Buffalo and three in the season finale at East Carolina, both losses.

In the 10 games in between, Vittatoe averaged 276.2 yards per game, threw 30 touchdowns and was interceptions only three times.

His favorite two receivers and four returning starters on the line are back.

Wide receivers Jeff Moturi and Kris Adams combined for 101 catches and 23 touchdowns, the latter figure the fourth-most for any receiving duo in the country.

Reliable tight end Jamar Hunt, third on the team in receptions and yardage last season, is gone. Juniors Jonny Moore and Elijah Goldtrap combined for 12 catches last year.

The running back position will manned by committee, but electric sophomore Vernon Frazier made his case in the spring to be the main man. Projected starter Donald Buckram sat out spring drills with a minor injury and will have his hands full holding off Frazier when fall camp begins.

The only spot on the line without a returning starter is center, where Tanner Cullumber and Eloy Atkinson carry their position battle into camp.

DEFENSE

The Miners were simply bad in the first year in coordinator Osia Lewis's 3-3-5 defense. Injuries were a big reason, as was learning a new scheme, but allowing 469.8 yards and 37 points per game wasn't what Price had in mind.

Whether that changes in 2009 might hinge on the return of "Miner" safety Braxton Amy, whose absence last year while recovering from a torn ACL was a significant factor in UTEP's struggles.

Assuming Amy is healthy, he could become an all-league performer in a defense designed to make the versatile "Miner" safety look like a star. Lewis molded his defensive approach at New Mexico under former coach Rocky Long, who created the "Lobo" safety position in a 3-3-5 defense to showcase the talents of Brian Urlacher.

Besides Amy, a 2007 starter, the Miners have three returning starters — cornerbacks Melvin Stephenson II and Cornelius Brown and safety Da'Mon Cromartie-Smith — in a secondary that surrendered more than 270 passing yards per game.

Linebackers Roddray Walker and Royzell Smith are solid. Robert Soleyjacks and Steve Riddick are returning starters on the line. But there simply isn't enough depth at those positions.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Freshman Logan Barrett will try to replace All-C-USA kicker Jose Martinez, the Miners' leading scorer in 2008.

Greg Hiett made a good push throughout the spring to take away punting duties from two-year starter Kyle Petersen. Then Petersen came up with a 67-yard punt that was downed at the 1-yard line in the spring game, putting him back in front of a competition that isn't over.

Receiver Jeff Moturi will be the primary punt and kick returner.

OVERVIEW

The pressure is on the defense to step up from awful to somewhere in the just-below-average range. If it can do that, there are enough key returning players on offense to assume the Miners won't have a problem scoring well into the 30s in most games, giving them a shot at a winning season.

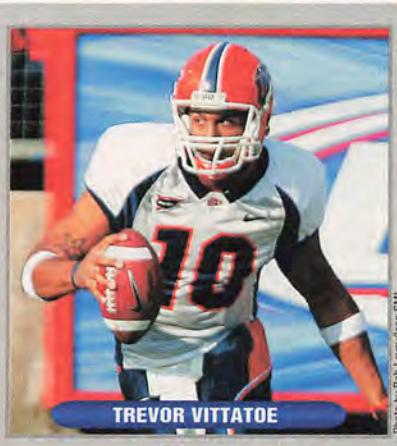


Photo by Bob Levey/Icon SMI

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Trevor Vittatoe***	**6-2**	**220**	**Jr.**
	Kyle Wright	6-1	205	Sr.
RB	Donald Buckram	5-10	190	Jr.
	Vernon Frazier	5-7	165	So.
WR	**Jeff Moturi***	**6-0**	**190**	**Sr.**
	Evan Davis	6-1	185	Jr.
WR	**Tufick Shadrawy***	**6-2**	**195**	**Sr.**
	Donavon Kemp	6-1	180	So.
WR	**Kris Adams***	**6-3**	**195**	**Jr.**
	Russell Carr	6-2	200	So.
TE	Jonny Moore	6-5	250	Jr.
	Elijah Goldtrap	6-5	265	Jr.
LT	**Mike Aguayo***	**6-4**	**300**	**Sr.**
	Britt Mitchell	6-7	305	Fr.
LG	**Cameron Raschke***	**6-4**	**320**	**Sr.**
	Anthony McNac	6-4	325	Jr.
C	Tanner Cullumber	6-4	280	Jr.
	Eloy Atkinson	6-3	280	Fr.
RG	**Rod Huntley***	**6-3**	**315**	**Jr.**
	Colby Meek	6-4	305	Sr.
RT	**Will Osolinsky***	**6-8**	**280**	**Jr.**
	Alex Solot	6-8	320	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Robert Soleyjacks***	**6-2**	**250**	**Jr.**
	Bernard Obi	6-2	235	So.
NT	**Steve Riddick***	**5-11**	**275**	**Sr.**
	Tory Robinson	6-3	290	Sr.
DE	Aaron King	6-4	250	Sr.
	Chris Moore	6-2	260	Sr.
LB	Roddray Walker	6-1	215	Sr.
	Anthony Morrow*	**6-0**	**205**	**Jr.**
LB	Brian Wilkins	6-2	245	Sr.
	Jeremy Springer	6-3	220	So.
LB	Royzell Smith	6-1	215	So.
	Isaiah Carter	6-2	215	Jr.
CB	**Melvin Stephenson II***	**5-10**	**185**	**Sr.**
	Dustin Bell	5-11	180	Sr.
CB	**Cornelius Brown***	**6-0**	**200**	**Sr.**
	Antwon Blake	5-10	180	So.
S	DeShawn Grayson	6-0	190	So.
	Clarence Ward	6-0	190	Sr.
S	Braxton Amy	6-0	210	Jr.
	Nick Sampson	6-0	200	So.
S	**Da'Mon Cromartie-Smith***	**6-2**	**210**	**Sr.**
	Wiston Jeune	6-3	205	Jr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Logan Barrett	6-1	175	Fr.
P	**Kyle Petersen***	**6-4**	**245**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	BUFFALO
Sept. 12	KANSAS
Sept. 19	at New Mexico State
Sept. 26	at Texas
Oct. 3	HOUSTON
Oct. 10	at Memphis
Oct. 21	TULSA
Oct. 31	UAB
Nov. 7	at Tulane
Nov. 14	at SMU
Nov. 21	at Rice
Nov. 28	MARSHALL

2008 Results

(5-7, 4-4)

L	at Buffalo	17-42
L	TEXAS	13-42
L	NEW MEXICO STATE	33-34
W	UCF	58-13
W	at Southern Miss	40-37
W	TULANE	24-21
L	at Tulsa	35-77
L	RICE	44-49
W	at Louisiana-Lafayette	37-24
W	SMU	36-10
L	at Houston	37-42
L	at East Carolina	21-53

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	32.9	25
Rushing	122.3	90
Passing	284.2	14
Total	406.5	31
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	37.0	112
Rushing	199.5	104
Passing	270.3	112
Total	469.8	115
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 12	+ 1.00	10

TULANE GREEN WAVE

NATIONAL RANK 92

C-USA rank: 8 | Record: 2-10 | C-USA record: 1-7 (5th, West) | Stadium: Superdome (69,703)

Green Wave in A Box

COACH: Bob Toledo — At Tulane: 6-18, 2 years; overall: 84-86, 15 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dan Dodd
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Steve Stanard
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1998
LAST BOWL: 2002, Hawaii
RETURNING STARTERS: 16, 8 offense, 6 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Andre Anderson, WR Jeremy Williams, C Andrew Nierman, DE Adam Kwentua, LB David Kirksey, P Ross Thevenot
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: When healthy, Anderson and Williams are among the best in the conference at their positions. The defensive line, already deep, was strengthened when Reggie Scott was given a sixth season.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: QB Joe Kemp has very limited experience. There's little depth on the offensive line and at linebacker. But, basically, when you're 112th in scoring offense and 106th in scoring defense, improvement has to come from everywhere.

OFFENSE

Whereas previous starting quarterbacks Kevin Moore and Anthony Scelfo were counted on to be game managers, sophomore Joe Kemp is looked on as more of a playmaker who can throw downfield and escape the rush.

Moore is still around, but it is Kemp who appears to have finally mastered coach Bob Toledo's West Coast offense. He was selected the starter after spring, beating out Moore and redshirt freshman Ryan Griffin.

Elsewhere on offense, the Green Wave has two proven playmakers — if they can stay healthy.

Running back Andre Anderson was fourth in the nation in rushing last year, averaging 142 yards per game, before suffering a shoulder fracture against Rice in the seventh game. Anderson, who rushed for more than 200 yards last season in games against SMU and UTEP, was held out of contact this spring.

Wide receiver Jeremy Williams was averaging 16.2 yards per catch before suffering a knee injury against Army in the fifth week.

Tight end Cody Sparks has good downfield receiving ability but must improve as a blocker.

Another dimension to the offense should come from freshman D.J. Banks, a high school quarterback who is being counted on to be the team's top return man, No. 2 receiver and occasional quarterback in the Wildcat formation.

DEFENSE

The biggest knock on former coordinator O'Neill Gilbert was that his blitz-happy schemes were too difficult for the players to grasp.

Steve Stanard simplified assignments, although it remains to be seen if a philosophy of staying in your base defense as much as possible will be successful in spread-happy Conference USA.

The defensive line is clearly the team's strong point.

Reggie Scott, who was granted a sixth year of eligibility by the NCAA, started 12 games at end last season but is now set at tackle. Senior Adam Kwentua has been a steady force at one end, and fellow senior Logan Kelley is a capable pass rusher on the other side.

Tackle Chris Asumnu was a regular as a true freshman last year.

The linebacker corps is ridiculously thin. Projected starter Kristofar Rhymes missed almost all of spring with hamstring problems. The other two likely starters, Travis Burks and David Kirksey, have ample starting experience.

In the secondary, safety Alex Lauricella has playmaking skills but has had trouble staying healthy. Safety Chinonso Echebelem and corner Charles Harris were starters last season and bring good experience, while Phillip Davis replaces three-year starter Josh Lumar at the other corner.

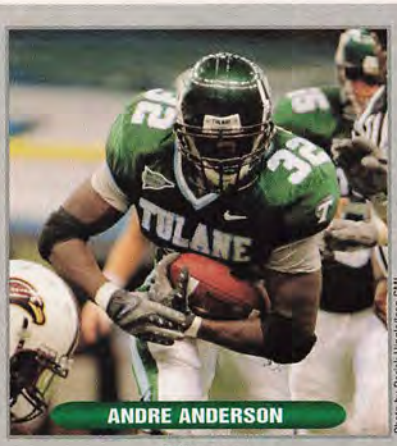
SPECIAL TEAMS

Ross Thevenot was second nationally in punting last season, averaging 45.8 yards per kick. He was less successful as a kicker, making 9 of 20 field goal attempts, with five being blocked. Signee Ryan Rome certainly could replace Thevenot there in the fall.

OVERVIEW

The team that finished last year with eight straight losses, being outscored 101-13 in the last two games, was certainly not the one that gave Alabama and East Carolina all they could handle at the beginning of the season. So, there is a certain talent level on hand.

There's more harmony and a sense of urgency, but any program relying on freshmen to be key backups — and, in some cases, probable starters — still has a long way to go.



ANDRE ANDERSON

Photo by Derick Hingle/Icon SMI

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Joe Kemp	6-4	206	So.
	Kevin Moore*	**6-5**	**234**	**Jr.**
RB	**Andre Anderson***	**6-0**	**211**	**Sr.**
	J.T McDonald	5-9	210	So.
FB	Antoine Duplessis	6-3	247	So.
	Kasey Stelly*	**6-1**	**239**	**So.**
WR	**Jeremy Williams***	**6-1**	**201**	**Sr.**
	Alan Mitchell	6-3	160	Jr.
WR	**Casey Robottom***	**5-11**	**173**	**Jr.**
	Chandler Davis	6-2	180	So.
TE	Cody Sparks	6-4	239	Jr.
	Tyler Helm	6-5	230	Jr.
LT	**Pete Hendrickson***	**6-7**	**297**	**Jr.**
	Eric Jones	6-6	297	So.
LG	Harris Howard	6-4	300	So.
	John Landa	6-3	327	Sr.
C	**Andrew Nierman***	**6-1**	**294**	**Jr.**
	Kevin Leary	6-2	296	Sr.
RG	Tyler Rice	6-4	292	Sr.
	Joey Ray	6-2	301	So.
RT	**Nick Landry***	**6-7**	**295**	**Sr.**
	Eric Jones	6-6	297	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
LE	Logan Kelley	6-2	246	Sr.
	Casey Blum	6-3	252	Fr.
NT	**Reggie Scott***	**6-4**	**260**	**Sr.**
	Cedric Wilson	6-2	279	So.
NT	Oscar Ponce de Leon	6-2	302	Jr.
	Chris Asumnu	6-2	285	So.
RE	**Adam Kwentua***	**6-3**	**250**	**Sr.**
	Brooks Cunningham	6-2	247	So.
LB	Travis Burks	6-0	215	Sr.
	James McMurchy	6-1	229	Sr.
LB	**David Kirksey***	**6-1**	**224**	**Sr.**
	Darryl Farley	5-11	228	Fr.
LB	Kristofar Rhymes	6-0	220	So.
	Nathan Austin	6-2	226	So.
CB	**Charles Harris***	**6-3**	**176**	**Sr.**
	Alex Wacha	6-0	186	Jr.
CB	Phillip Davis	5-10	170	Jr.
	Alex Wacha	6-0	186	Jr.
SS	**Chinonso Echebelem***	**6-1**	**200**	**Sr.**
	Corey Sonnier*	**5-10**	**189**	**Sr.**
FS	Alex Lauricella	6-0	178	Fr.
	Ian Harson	5-11	174	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Ross Thevenot***	**6-0**	**180**	**Sr.**
P	**Ross Thevenot***	**6-0**	**180**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 4	TULSA
Sept. 12	BYU
Sept. 26	McNEESE STATE
Oct. 3	at Army
Oct. 10	MARSHALL
Oct. 17	HOUSTON
Oct. 24	at Southern Miss
Oct. 31	at LSU
Nov. 7	UTEP
Nov. 14	at Rice
Nov. 21	at UCF
Nov. 28	at SMU

2008 Results

(2-10, 1-7)

L	at Alabama	6-20
L	EAST CAROLINA	24-28
W	LOUISIANA-MONROE	24-10
W	SMU	34-27
L	ARMY	13-44
L	at UTEP	21-24
L	RICE	17-42
L	at LSU	10-35
L	at Houston	14-42
L	UAB	24-41
L	at Tulsa	7-56
L	at Memphis	6-45

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	16.7	112
Rushing	118.4	93
Passing	221.3	52
Total	339.7	80
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	34.5	106
Rushing	218.4	113
Passing	172.8	14
Total	391.3	84
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 5	-0.42	86

UCF KNIGHTS

NATIONAL RANK 97

C-USA rank: 9 | Record: 4-8 | C-USA: 3-5 (T-4th, East) | Stadium: Bright House Networks Stadium (45,301)

Knights in A Box

COACH: George O'Leary — At UCF: 26-36, 5 years; overall: 78-69, 12 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Charlie Taaffe
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dave Huxtable
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2007
LAST BOWL: 2007, Liberty Bowl
RETURNING STARTERS: 18; 10 offense, 7 defense, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Rob Calabrese, RB Brynn Harvey, WR Rocky Ross, DE Bruce Miller, DT Torrell Troup, LB Lawrence Young, LB Cory Hogue
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The offense is filled with veterans, and Calabrese looks more comfortable as he approaches his sophomore season after starting eight games as a true freshman in 2008. The wide receiver position is deep. Six starters in the defensive front seven are back.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The secondary will have four new starters, including FS Derrick Hallman, who moved from linebacker to bolster the situation. Calabrese has to stay healthy because backup QB Joe Weatherford struggled in the spring with new coordinator Taaffe's spread offense.

OFFENSE

UCF returns 10 offensive starters, but a newcomer might make the biggest difference.

Coordinator Charlie Taaffe inherits an offense that ranked last in the country, producing only 113.3 yards rushing per game and barely more than that through the air (116.3).

Taaffe plans to spread out the Knights and go downfield more in the passing game, and sophomore quarterback Rob Calabrese seemed to respond to that challenge in the spring.

The Knights can make the spread work because of a deep receiving corps featuring the top three pass catchers from last year — Brian Watters, Kamar Aiken and Khymest Williams. Redshirt freshman Marquee Williams and two veterans returning from injuries — A.J. Guyton and Rocky Ross — should start before it's all over.

Tight end/H-back Corey Rabazinski, whose leg injury cost him half of the 2008 season, returns along with John Lubischer and Ricky Kay. Adam Nissley, who had six starts at tackle and six at tight end, is back in the mix at tight end.

The line featured four first-year starters a year ago. That experience should pay off this year. New line coach Brent Key is still doing some tinkering, moving Nick Pieschel, who started seven games at guard, to the vital left tackle spot.

There could be an interesting situation at quarterback in the fall. Former Wake Forest backup Brett Hodges said he would transfer to UCF to take advantage of the NCAA rule that allows graduate students to play immediately at another school if their field of interest isn't offered at their present school.

DEFENSE

The front seven is stout, led by tackles Travis Timmons and Torrell Troup, and linebackers Lawrence Young and Chance Henderson. Ends Bruce Miller, David Williams and Jarvis Geathers all had at least six starts in 2008.

The front four might be the team's strongest area, but linebacker is not far behind. Along with Young and Henderson, veterans Cory Hogue and Jordan Richards both return from injuries and should move into the starting lineup.

The Knights have so much confidence in their linebacking corps they are moving junior Derrick Hallman, a starter there last year, to free safety.

There's another, perhaps more pressing, reason for the move.

The Knights lose all four starters from the secondary. Johnell Neal, Sha'reff Rashad, Joe Burnett and Jason Venson ended their careers with 183 starts and 50 interceptions.

Some of the potential replacements did see some playing time last year, so they aren't completely green. It didn't help, however, that cornerback Emery Allen, a potential starter, hurt his leg in the spring and might not be ready in the fall.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Junior punter Blake Clingan averaged more than 40 yards a try last season. Sophomore Nick Cattoi, who shared the kicking chores with Derek Daly last year, should get the job to himself.

Burnett was a standout in the return game. No successor was found in the spring.

OVERVIEW

Will the team's recent up-and-down trend under coach George O'Leary continue? UCF is 8-27 in three even-numbered years under O'Leary. In his two odd-number seasons, the Knights are 18-9 and have played in bowls. The offense is there to get the Knights back to the postseason in 2009, but the secondary has to hold up to make the defense work.

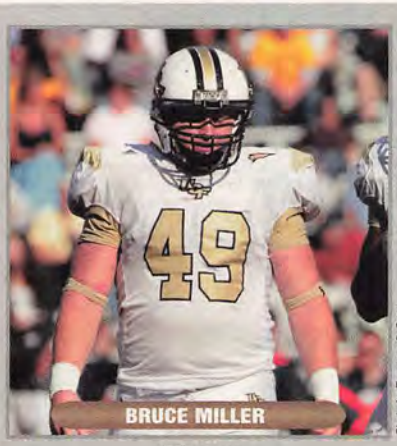

BRUCE MILLER

Photo by Tomasso DeRosa

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Rob Calabrese***	**6-2**	**218**	**So.**
	Joe Weatherford	6-4	206	So.
TB	**Brynn Harvey***	**6-1**	**202**	**So.**
	Latavious Murray	6-3	216	So.
FB	Brendan Kelly	6-3	225	Fr.
	Billy Giovanetti	5-11	223	Fr.
WR	**Rocky Ross***	**6-2**	**202**	**Sr.**
	Brian Watters*	**6-2**	**193**	**Jr.**
WR	**Kamar Aiken***	**6-2**	**211**	**Jr.**
	Khymest Williams	5-10	179	Jr.
TE	**Adam Nissley***	**6-6**	**254**	**So.**
	John Lubischer*	**6-4**	**250**	**Jr.**
LT	**Nick Pieschel***	**6-7**	**284**	**So.**
	Mike Buxton	6-8	317	Jr.
LG	Theo Goins	6-4	320	Fr.
	Jarien Moreland	6-4	318	Fr.
C	**Ian Bustillo***	**6-2**	**302**	**Sr.**
	Zac Norris	6-3	275	So.
RG	Steven Robinson	6-3	314	Fr.
	Wes Tunuufi Sauvao	6-3	304	Jr.
RT	**Jah Reid***	**6-7**	**310**	**Jr.**
	Chad Hounshell	6-4	311	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**David Williams***	**6-2**	**212**	**Jr.**
	Darius Nall	6-3	253	SO.
DT	**Travis Timmons***	**6-4**	**288**	**Sr.**
	Chris Martin	6-5	279	Fr.
DT	**Torrell Troup***	**6-3**	**315**	**Sr.**
	Rashidi Haughton	6-3	272	Jr.
DE	**Bruce Miller***	**6-2**	**258**	**Jr.**
	Jarvis Geathers	6-2	234	Sr.
LB	Jordan Richards	6-2	222	Sr.
	Loren Robinson	6-3	209	Fr.
LB	Cory Hogue	6-1	224	Sr.
	Chance Henderson*	**6-1**	**240**	**Sr.**
LB	**Lawrence Young***	**6-0**	**205**	**Jr.**
	Alex Thompson	6-2	229	Sr.
CB	Josh Robinson	5-10	181	Fr.
	Emery Allen	5-9	177	Sr.
CB	Darin Baldwin	5-11	200	Jr.
	Justin Boddie	6-2	184	Jr.
SS	Reggie Weams	6-0	191	Jr.
	Jarrett Swaby	6-1	180	Fr.
FS	**Derrick Hallman***	**6-0**	**213**	**Jr.**
	Vance King	6-0	189	Fr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Nick Cattoi	6-5	209	So.
P	**Blake Clingan***	**6-3**	**228**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	SAMFORD
Sept. 12	at Southern Miss
Sept. 19	BUFFALO
Sept. 26	at East Carolina
Oct. 3	MEMPHIS
Oct. 17	MIAMI
Oct. 24	at Rice
Nov. 1	MARSHALL
Nov. 7	at Texas
Nov. 14	HOUSTON
Nov. 21	TULANE
Nov. 27	at UAB

2008 Results

(4-8, 3-5)

W	SOUTH CAROLINA STATE	17-0
L	SOUTH FLORIDA (OT)	24-31
L	at Boston College	7-34
L	at UTEP	13-58
W	SMU	31-17
L	at Miami (FL)	14-20
L	at Tulsa	19-49
L	EAST CAROLINA (OT)	10-13
L	SOUTHERN MISS	6-17
W	at Marshall	30-14
W	at Memphis	28-21
L	UAB	0-15

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	16.6	113
Rushing	113.3	98
Passing	116.3	115
Total	229.5	119
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.1	54
Rushing	126.1	33
Passing	207.7	58
Total	333.8	43
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 1	- 0.08	55

UAB BLAZERS

NATIONAL RANK 105

C-USA rank: 10 | Record: 4-8 | C-USA record: 3-4 (T-4th, East) | Stadium: Legion Field (72,000)

Blazers in A Box

COACH: Neil Callaway — At UAB and overall: 6-18, 2 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kim Helton
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Eric Schumann
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: None
LAST BOWL: 2004, Hawaii Bowl
RETURNING STARTERS: 18; 11 offense, 7 defense
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Joe Webb, C Jake Seitz, RB Rashaud Slaughter, WR Frantrell Forrest, RT Terence Edge, DE Anthony Barnes, SS Chase Daniel
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: UAB has three of C-USA's top playmakers in dual-threat QB Joe Webb, RB Rashaud Slaughter and WR Frantrell Forrest, so points shouldn't be hard to come by. The Blazers also possess one of the league's best offensive lines, led by hard-nosed center Jake Seitz. The defensive line is deep and experienced.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: After losing its top three tacklers to graduation, UAB will need to find some enforcers on defense. The Blazers also need to improve a pass rush that produced 15 sacks all last season. Special teams are also a major area of concern after the loss of the holder, snapper and kicker/punter Swayze Waters to graduation.

OFFENSE

Joe Webb is arguably UAB's best athlete ever at quarterback, but he must cut down on turnovers.

Webb set the single-season C-USA quarterback record last season by rushing for 1,021 yards and accounted for 3,388 total yards and 21 touchdowns. But his 16 interceptions were the third-highest total in the conference.

The senior showed improved decision-making in the spring. During the final scrimmage, he completed 21 of 29 passes for 283 yards and three touchdowns without an interception.

Joining Webb as the team's top playmakers are running back Rashaud Slaughter and receiver Frantrell Forrest.

Slaughter ran for 514 yards and four touchdowns last season, and ranked second on the team in catches with 29. Coach Neil Callaway would like to improve on last season's rushing average of 168.9 yards per game, so look for Slaughter's numbers to improve.

Forrest ranked fifth in the conference in all-purpose yards a season ago. He was one of nine UAB receivers to record at least 10 receptions last year, which speaks to the depth and talent at the position.

Senior center Jake Seitz and junior right tackle Terence Edge are the standouts on a deep line.

DEFENSE

UAB ranked 106th nationally in total defense last season, but showed signs of turning the corner in its final three games. After allowing 37.1 points per game in their first nine contests, the Blazers yielded an average of just 13.7 points to their last three opponents.

UAB's defense returns seven starters, but an area of concern is the lack of numbers at linebacker and safety, where the team lost its top three tacklers and four starters overall. Callaway expects incoming recruits to aid both positions.

UAB's strength will be the line, where ends Bryant Turner and Anthony Barnes return along with juniors D.J. Reese and Tim Davis.

Davis was moved from tackle to end this spring, to make room for senior nose tackle David DeCordova. Junior college transfer Derek Slaughter also had an impressive spring and should make an impact.

One to watch at linebacker is freshman Daniel White, a January enrollee who was listed as the starter in the middle after spring.

UAB must replace three starters in the secondary, including All-C-USA cornerback Kevin Sanders. Senior Brandon Carlisle brings a lot of veteran savvy to the cornerback position, while sophomore Terrell Springs started the final six games.

Chase Daniel, who tied for third on the team in tackles, enters 2009 as the team's starting strong safety. Junior college transfer Hiram Atwater and junior college signee Elliot McGaskin will compete for the opening at free safety.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Replacing All-C-USA kicker/punter Swayze Waters won't be easy. Sophomore Trey Ragland got the bulk of the kicking duties in spring practice, but he will be challenged by incoming freshman Josh Zahn.

Frantrell Forrest, who averaged 21.3 yards per return last year, and Rashaud Slaughter likely will share the kickoff return role. Jim Mitchell and Nick Adams will battle it out for punt return duties.

OVERVIEW

UAB is nearly up to the full scholarship limit of 85 heading into year three of Callaway's rebuilding process. Led by quarterback Joe Webb and a deep set of skill players, the Blazers will have enough offense to score on anyone in the league. If UAB's defense can rise to the challenge, the Blazers could be in line for their first bowl berth since 2004.

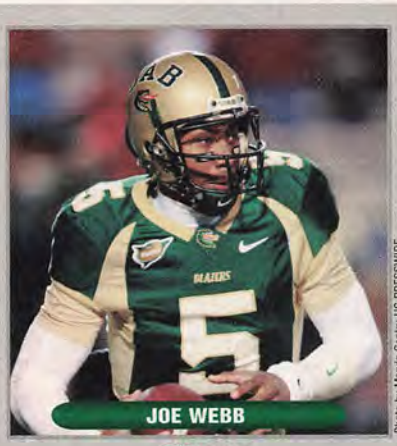


Photo by Marvin Gentry-US PRESSWIRE

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Joe Webb***	**6-4**	**220**	**Sr.**
	David Isabelle	6-3	185	Fr.
RB	**Rashaud Slaughter***	**5-9**	**185**	**Sr.**
	Justin Brooks	5-11	215	Jr.
WR	**Mark Ferrell***	**6-2**	**220**	**Sr.**
	Nick Adams	6-2	195	Jr.
WR	**Frantrell Forrest***	**6-2**	**195**	**Jr.**
	Darryl Harris	5-10	170	Sr.
WR	**Mario Wright***	**6-5**	**205**	**Jr.**
	Rodell Carter	6-4	220	Jr.
TE	**Zach Lankford***	**6-4**	**250**	**Sr.**
	Jeffery Anderson	6-3	255	Jr.
LT	Matt McCants	6-7	295	So.
	Willie Thompson	6-6	295	Sr.
LG	Daniel Seahorn	6-2	300	Sr.
	Greg Bulls*	**6-4**	**300**	**Jr.**
C	**Jake Seitz***	**6-2**	**290**	**Sr.**
	Caleb Thomas	6-3	290	So.
RG	**Adam Hollifield***	**6-3**	**300**	**Jr.**
	Jared Koechner	6-5	285	Sr.
RT	**Terence Edge***	**6-4**	**295**	**Jr.**
	Greg Calhoun*	**6-3**	**300**	**So.**

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Bryant Turner***	**6-2**	**260**	**Jr.**
	Tim Davis*	**6-0**	**275**	**Jr.**
DT	**D.J. Reese***	**6-4**	**280**	**Jr.**
	Elliott Henigan	6-4	240	So.
NT	David DeCordova	6-2	280	Sr.
	Nick Davison	6-0	275	So.
DE	**Anthony Barnes***	**6-3**	**255**	**Sr.**
	Derek Slaughter	6-2	245	Jr.
LB	Drew Luker	6-3	195	So.
	Darrion Wilson	6-3	220	Jr.
LB	Daniel White	6-2	220	Fr.
	Katrell Watters	6-0	235	So.
LB	**Keon Harris***	**5-11**	**205**	**Jr.**
	Lamanski Ware*	**6-2**	**205**	**So.**
CB	Brandon Carlisle	5-10	180	Sr.
	Andre Hicks	5-9	175	So.
CB	**Terrell Springs***	**5-9**	**175**	**So.**
	Marquis Coleman	6-1	185	So.
SS	Chase Daniel	6-3	190	So.
	Justin Smartt	5-11	175	Jr.
FS	Hiram Atwater	6-0	200	Jr.
	Elliot McGaskin	6-1	200	Jr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Trey Ragland	5-11	175	So.
P	Trey Ragland	5-11	175	So.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	RICE
Sept. 12	SMU
Sept. 19	at Troy
Sept. 26	at Texas A&M
Oct. 1	SOUTHERN MISS
Oct. 17	at Ole Miss
Oct. 24	at Marshall
Oct. 31	at UTEP
Nov. 7	FLORIDA ATLANTIC
Nov. 14	at Memphis
Nov. 21	at East Carolina
Nov. 28	UCF

2008 Results

(4-8, 3-5)

L	TULSA	22-45
L	at Florida Atlantic	34-49
L	at Tennessee	3-35
W	ALABAMA STATE	45-10
L	at South Carolina	13-26
L	MEMPHIS	30-33
L	at Houston	20-45
W	MARSHALL	23-21
L	at Southern Miss	14-70
W	at Tulane	41-24
L	EAST CAROLINA	13-17
W	at UCF	15-0

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	22.8	86
Rushing	168.9	39
Passing	197.3	76
Total	366.2	56
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	31.3	95
Rushing	167.0	88
Passing	262.9	108
Total	429.9	106
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-1	- 0.08	67

SMU MUSTANGS

NATIONAL RANK 106

C-USA rank: 11 | Record: 1-11 | C-USA record: 0-8 (6th, West) | Stadium: Gerald J. Ford Stadium (32,000)

Mustangs in A Box

COACH: June Jones — At SMU: 1-11, 1 year; overall: 77-52, 10 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dan Morrison
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tom Mason
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1984, Southwest Conference co-champions
LAST BOWL: 1984, Aloha
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 8 offense, 7 defense
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Bo Levi Mitchell, WR Emmanuel Sanders, WR Aldrick Robinson, LB Youri Yenga, LB Pete Fleps
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Sanders and Robinson are among the top receiving tandems in the conference, and are likely to flourish in the second year of Jones' spread attack. Switching to a 3-4 defense with faster coverage-type linebackers should give SMU a fighting chance.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Three of the first four games are on the road, including a C-USA tilt at UAB. The transition to the 3-4 will take time to digest. The turnover-prone Mitchell must reduce his interception total of 23 from a year ago.

OFFENSE

Ball security will be a mantra for SMU after the Mustangs were next to last nationally in interceptions thrown last season.

Quarterback Bo Levi Mitchell threw 23 interceptions as a freshman. So coach June Jones awarded the defense (and penalized the offense) 25-scoreboard points in SMU's spring game. Mitchell got the message loud and clear, completing 12 of 16 for 108 yards and zero interceptions.

Mitchell has two legitimate weapons, Emmanuel Sanders and Aldrick Robinson, to throw to from the pistol formation. Both ranked among the top 15 nationally during the 2008 season in receptions. SMU's all-time leader is Sanders with 27 touchdown catches.

SMU is putting more emphasis on the pistol formation, in which the quarterback lines up closer to the center than in the traditional shotgun formation. The running back is four yards directly behind the quarterback, leaving Mitchell to run or pass from the set.

The move was deemed necessary after SMU ranked last nationally with 41.4 yards per game. SMU scored just three rushing touchdowns.

The Mustangs were quite potent throwing the football in Jones first year, ranking 17th in the country at 272.9 yards per game.

DEFENSE

The Mustangs, to keep up with the fast-moving offenses in Conference USA, have overhauled the defense. The move to the 3-4 alignment was made to utilize an abundance of linebacker-type athletes.

Jones decided to switch to and recruit for the 3-4 after the Ponies were second to last nationally in total defense at 479.5 yards per game.

SMU is turning to junior Pete Fleps, who is moving from strongside linebacker to middle linebacker. He will call the defensive signals. Senior Chase Kennemer is the frontrunner at inside linebacker.

Juniors Youri Yenga and Patrick Fleming have switched from end to outside linebacker. Yenga is the team's top pass-rushing threat, posting 10.5 tackles and 6.5 sacks a year ago.

Evan Huahulu and Chris Parham will see time at nose guard and junior Marquis Frazier and sophomore Taylor Thompson are the leading candidates for the other two defensive line spots.

Ball-hawking corner Bryan McCann returns after leading the Ponies with three interceptions in 2008.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker Matt Szymanski is eligible after sitting out the 2008 season following his transfer from Texas A&M. The highly recruited kicker was 17 of 30 in two seasons for the Aggies. He had 49 touchbacks in 135 kickoffs in two years. He will also punt for SMU.

Szymanski replaces two-way specialist Thomas Morstead, who was among the C-USA leaders in punting, but he also hit 11 of 15 field goals in 2008. Szymanski hit a 61-yarder in high school, which still ranks as the longest field goal in 5A Texas playoff history.

OVERVIEW

Jones has put together two impressive recruiting classes in Dallas. Now, it must translate to game day results.

Coming off a 1-11 season when everything that could go wrong seemingly did at times, the Ponies will need to be sharp early. Three of their first four games are on the road, including contests against Washington State and TCU that will test the new 3-4 defense.

If Mitchell can keep the offense humming and not turn over the football, then SMU has a chance to make some noise. The experienced offense will be counted on early while the new defensive alignment finds its way.

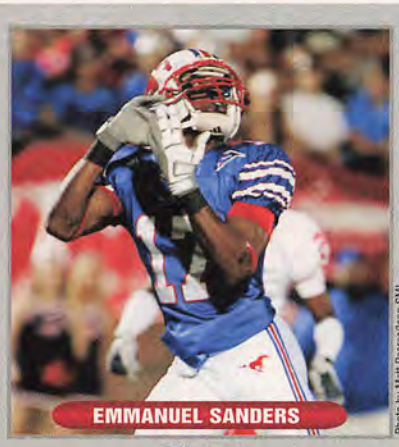

EMMANUEL SANDERS

Photo by Matt Pearce/Icon SMI

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Bo Levi Mitchell***	**6-1**	**201**	**So.**
	Braden Smith	5-11	194	Fr.
RB	Chris Butler	5-10	216	Jr.
	Zach Line	6-1	233	Fr.
WR	**Aldrick Robinson***	**5-10**	**176**	**Jr.**
	Zach Zimmerman	6-1	165	Sr.
WR	**Emmanuel Sanders***	**5-11**	**180**	**Sr.**
	Cole Loftin	6-0	185	Fr.
WR	**Cole Beasley***	**5-9**	**174**	**So.**
	Justin Willis	5-11	197	Sr.
WR	**Terrance Wilkerson***	**5-10**	**175**	**So.**
	Bradley Haynes	6-3	209	So.
LT	**Kelvin Beachum***	**6-3**	**271**	**So.**
	Josh Emshoff	6-4	268	Fr.
LG	Josh LeRibeus	6-3	330	So.
	Kelly Turner	6-3	293	So.
C	**Blake McJunkin***	**6-1**	**263**	**So.**
	Mitch Enright	6-1	275	Sr.
RG	**Bryce Tennison***	**6-2**	**276**	**So.**
	Jordan Free	6-2	294	Fr.
RT	J.T. Brooks	6-5	312	So.
	Sidney Nwangwu	6-4	320	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Taylor Thompson***	**6-6**	**256**	**So.**
	Margus Hunt	6-8	267	Fr.
NG	Chris Parham	6-0	298	Jr.
	Evan Huahulu	6-1	335	So.
DE	Marquis Frazier	6-4	281	Jr.
	Kevin Grenier	6-4	255	So.
LB	Patrick Fleming	6-4	236	Jr.
	Jay Angotti	5-10	202	Jr.
LB	**Pete Fleps***	**6-1**	**228**	**Jr.**
	Victor Jones	6-0	214	So.
LB	Chase Kennemer	6-0	211	Sr.
	Cameron Rogers	6-0	208	Fr.
LB	**Youri Yenga***	**6-1**	**223**	**Jr.**
	Andrew Ellison	6-2	226	So.
CB	**Derrius Bell***	**5-10**	**165**	**Jr.**
	Bennie Thomas	5-7	178	Jr.
CB	**Bryan McCann***	**5-10**	**179**	**Sr.**
	Keith Robinson	5-8	166	So.
SS	**Rock Dennis***	**5-9**	**186**	**Sr.**
	Tyler Jones	6-1	201	Jr.
FS	**Chris Banjo***	**5-10**	**190**	**So.**
	Bryce Hudman	6-2	204	Sr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Matt Szymanski	6-1	185	Jr.
P	Matt Szymanski	6-1	185	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	STEPHEN F. AUSTIN
Sept. 12	at UAB
Sept. 19	at Washington State
Oct. 3	at TCU
Oct. 10	EAST CAROLINA
Oct. 17	NAVY
Oct. 24	at Houston
Oct. 31	at Tulsa
Nov. 7	RICE
Nov. 14	UTEP
Nov. 21	at Marshall
Nov. 28	TULANE

2008 Results

(1-11, 0-8)

L	at Rice	27-56
W	TEXAS STATE	47-36
L	at Texas Tech	7-43
L	TCU	7-48
L	at Tulane	27-34
L	at UCF	17-31
L	TULSA	31-37
L	HOUSTON	38-44
L	at Navy	7-34
L	MEMPHIS	26-31
L	at UTEP	10-36
L	SOUTHERN MISS	12-28

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	21.3	93
Rushing	41.4	119
Passing	272.9	17
Total	314.3	98
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	38.2	115
Rushing	225.6	116
Passing	253.9	101
Total	479.5	118
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 13	-1.08	113

RICE OWLS

NATIONAL RANK 108

C-USA rank: 12 | Record: 10-3 | C-USA record: 7-1 (T-1, West) | Stadium: Rice Stadium (47,000)

Owls in A Box

COACH: David Bailiff — At Rice: 13-12, 2 years; overall: 34-27, 5 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ed Zaunbrecher
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Chuck Dreisbach, Craig Naivar
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1994, Southwest Conference co-champions
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 4 offense, 8 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: WR Toren Dixon, WR Corbin Smiter, LT Scott Mitchell, DE Cheta Ozougwu, DT Chance Talbert, FS Andrew Sendejo
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Bailiff has changed the mentality at Rice, and for the first time in many years, the Owls expect to win. The second-half home schedule — UCF, Tulane, UTEP — seemingly provides opportunities for a good finish, especially if the offense has developed by then.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: With so much lost skill on offense, it will be incumbent upon the defense to be on point early. Playing the first three games on the road, including two against Big 12 teams — Texas Tech and Oklahoma State — will be a big challenge.

OFFENSE

After constructing one of college football's biggest turnarounds, coach David Bailiff is now faced with cultivating a quarterback worthy of filling the shoes of departed star Chase Clement.

Clement ranked fourth nationally at 316.8 yards per game for the Owls, who won 10 games for the first time since 1949. Junior John Thomas Shepherd, redshirt freshman Ryan Lewis and sophomore Nick Fanuzzi — a transfer from Alabama — will continue to compete under center in the preseason.

Complicating the transition is the absence of 1,000-yard pass-catchers James Casey and Jarett Dillard. Casey was second in the country in catches and seventh in yards per game in 2008. Dillard had career totals of 4,138 receiving yards and 60 touchdowns.

Not only will Rice have to fill those holes, but the team has a new offensive coordinator in veteran assistant Ed Zaunbrecher.

Leading the way is returning wide receiver Toren Dixon, who has a 26-game reception streak. His numbers, which were solid last season (50 catches for 598 yards and five touchdowns), should soar in 2009. Wide receiver Patrick Randolph also is back.

The line is anchored by left tackle Scott Mitchell and left guard Jake Hicks. Mitchell has logged 18 consecutive starts, and Hicks is moving from right tackle, where he made 10 starts in 2008.

Tailback Tyler Smith, returning from a 2007 knee injury, had a good spring to move to the top of the depth chart.

DEFENSE

Rice returns eight starters — and the bulk of its backups — from a unit that was among the worst in the nation. The defense will have to step up early as the retooled offense might take time to come together.

Free safety Andrew Sendejo, Rice's career leader with 254 tackles and eight interceptions, is the backbone of the defense. Despite missing a couple of games, he led the team in tackles (94), fumble recoveries (three) and tied for the lead in interceptions (three).

Three-fifths of the secondary returns, including strong safety Chris Jones and corner Chris Jammer, the cousin of former Texas star cornerback Quentin Jammer.

The Owls are also counting on improved play up front from tackle Chance Talbert and end Scott Solomon, both honorable mention all-conference performers in 2008. Solomon, a junior, hinted at bigger things with a strong finish to last season.

Linebackers Terrance Garmon and end Cheta Ozougwu also return. Ozougwu led all defensive linemen with 40 tackles a year ago.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Rice returns both specialists from a year ago. Clark Fangmeier was 6 of 10 on field goal attempts, with a long of 46 yards. He hit all 73 of his PAT tries.

Punter Kyle Martens averaged 38.3 yards as a freshman, and is looking for improved production in 2008.

OVERVIEW

The biggest question is can Rice duplicate last year's benchmark season with an unproven quarterback?

The early schedule is certainly a challenge with three straight road games to open the season. Then, the Owls play two teams that defeated them last year — Vanderbilt and Tulsa — on back-to-back weekends in Houston.

The Owls have learned under Bailiff to compete at a high level, which should help them overcome some potential bumps. But only five players on the offensive two-deep are seniors, so the learning curve figures to be too steep this season.

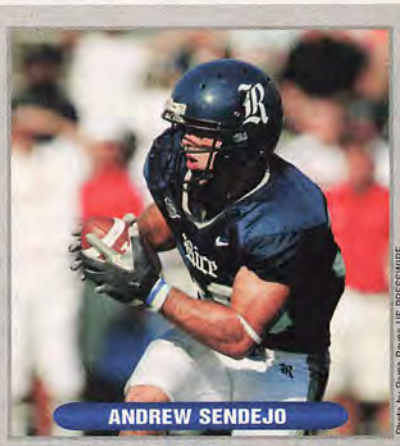


Photo by Rams Reyna-US PRESSWIRE

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	John Thomas Shepherd	6-1	195	Jr.
	Ryan Lewis	6-3	205	Fr.
TB	Tyler Smith	5-8	190	So.
	Jeramy Goodson	5-9	185	Sr.
WR	**Toren Dixon***	**6-2**	**212**	**Sr.**
	Pierre Beasley	6-3	220	Jr.
WR	Taylor Wardlow	6-6	236	Sr.
	Vance McDonald	6-5	237	Fr.
WR	Corbin Smiter	6-2	210	Sr.
	Taylor Dupree	6-1	212	Jr.
WR	**Patrick Randolph***	**5-11**	**170**	**Jr.**
	Roddy Maginot	5-10	160	So.
LT	**Scott Mitchell***	**6-4**	**290**	**Jr.**
	Kody Emmert	6-5	265	So.
LG	**Jake Hicks***	**6-3**	**283**	**So.**
	Clay Hebert	6-3	290	Fr.
C	Keshawn Carrington	6-3	265	So.
	Eric Ball	6-3	280	Fr.
RG	Davon Allen	6-2	322	So.
	Travis Mason	6-4	294	Sr.
RT	Tyler Parish	6-4	280	So.
	Stefan Nazar	6-5	280	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Scott Solomon***	**6-3**	**263**	**Jr.**
	Kramer Lucio	6-4	250	Jr.
DT	**Chance Talbert***	**6-6**	**283**	**Sr.**
	Brian Stacey	6-1	270	So.
NG	John Gioffre	6-0	293	So.
	Michael Smith	6-1	307	So.
DE	**Cheta Ozougwu***	**6-2**	**250**	**Jr.**
	Arnaud Gason-Nadon	6-4	235	So.
LB	Tanner Shuck	5-11	210	So.
	Robert Calhoun*	**6-1**	**233**	**Sr.**
LB	**Terrance Garmon***	**6-2**	**220**	**Sr.**
	Aaron Williams	6-3	213	Jr.
CB	**Chris Jammer***	**6-1**	**186**	**So.**
	Martin Uwah	5-8	165	So.
CB	Jarret Ben	5-10	171	So.
	John Welch	6-2	185	Sr.
S	Travis Bradshaw	6-1	200	So.
	Randy Kitchens	6-3	215	So.
SS	**Chris Jones***	**6-3**	**200**	**Jr.**
	Max Anyiam	6-2	210	Jr.
FS	**Andrew Sendejo***	**6-1**	**210**	**Sr.**
	Xavier Webb	5-11	207	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Clark Fangmeier***	**5-11**	**190**	**Sr.**
P	**Kyle Martens***	**6-6**	**190**	**So.**

*** Returning Starters in Bold**

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	at UAB
Sept. 12	at Texas Tech
Sept. 19	at Oklahoma State
Sept 26	VANDERBILT
Oct. 3	TULSA
Oct. 10	NAVY
Oct. 17	at East Carolina
Oct. 24	UCF
Nov. 7	at SMU
Nov. 14	TULANE
Nov. 21	UTEP
Nov. 28	at Houston

2008 Results

	(10-3, 7-1)	
W	SMU	56-27
W	at Memphis	42-35
L	at Vanderbilt	21-28
L	at Texas	10-52
W	NORTH TEXAS	77-20
L	at Tulsa	28-63
W	SOUTHERN MISS	45-40
W	at Tulane	42-17
W	at UTEP	49-44
W	ARMY	38-31
W	MARSHALL	35-10
W	HOUSTON	56-42
	Texas Bowl	
W	vs. Western Michigan	38-14

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	41.3	8
Rushing	143.7	62
Passing	327.2	5
Total	470.9	10
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	33.3	103
Rushing	182.8	99
Passing	269.5	110
Total	452.2	111
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 15	+ 1.15	7

It's a Boise State World, but the Pack (and pack) is Closing

Boise State has won six of the past seven WAC championships, with Hawaii's miracle run in 2007 the only blemish against it.

Last year, a loaded Fresno State team with a perfect BCS schedule fell flat, allowing the Broncos to ascend to the throne, missing another perfect season by a single point in a bowl loss to Texas Christian.

This year, Boise State will have some combatants, including up-and-coming Louisiana Tech and Nevada, but betting against the Broncos and fourth-year head coach Chris Petersen is a bad idea.

Granted, they have some issues on the offensive and defensive fronts. They lost talented wide receiver Jeremy Childs and emotional epicenter Ian Johnson, but probably won't miss a beat.

Sophomore quarterback Kellen Moore is a prime example. The unheralded freshman out of tiny Prosser, Wash., came out of nowhere to lead the league in passing efficiency and is now entrenched as the team's starter.

Nevada has the best all-around player in junior quarterback Colin Kaepernick, a threat running and throwing the football. He has the conference's top back in Vai Taua lined up behind him, making Chris Ault's pistol formation a loaded gun.

Both teams are solid defensively with Boise State boasting the WAC's top defensive back in Kyle Wilson. The Wolf Pack counter with two talented defensive linemen in Kevin Basped and Dontay Moch, giving it the feel of a two-man race.

Louisiana Tech, Fresno State and Hawaii round out the upper tier. LaTech's Bulldogs can run the ball effectively, thanks to senior Daniel Porter, and defend the run with D-lineman D'Anthony Smith patrolling the front.

Fresno State counters with a quartet of running backs who accounted for nearly 2,400 yards and 19 touchdowns, as well as D-lineman Chris Carter and linebacker Ben Jacobs.

Hawaii will be better offensively, but must replace nine starters on defense, leaving the Warriors in a delicate spot as San Jose State, New Mexico State, Idaho and Utah State try to escape the latter half of the pack.

It's not a great conference from top to bottom, but each team has reason to believe it will be better than last year. That leaves Boise State as the one to beat, a position the Broncos have proved to be quite comfortable in most of the decade.

— Paul Arnett

WAC Picks

	GOOD NEWS	BAD NEWS	OUR CALL
1. Boise State	Won six of past seven WAC titles; nobody beats 'em in Bronco Stadium.	The problem with having lots of good players is they eventually have to leave.	Tougher-than-usual schedule makes perfect run unlikely ... but not impossible.
2. Nevada	Chris Ault's pistol offense has perfect QB at helm in Colin Kaepernick.	Too often this team does things like lose to New Mexico State.	If they can navigate the WAC without incident, a Nov. 22 game at BSU could be fun.
3. Louisiana Tech	If Tech continues solid ground game, Bulldogs are worthy contenders.	Offense could use a little big-play capability to keep from being one-dimensional.	They're dangerous, but games at Fresno State and Nevada might make this prediction too high.
4. Fresno State	Pat Hill, often in demand from other schools, is back coaching in the Valley.	As beloved as Hill is, FSU faithful getting tired of not winning the WAC.	That "not winning the WAC" stuff will continue this year unless Bulldogs far exceed expectations.
5. Hawaii	The Warriors return nine starters a year after having to start from scratch.	This time the defense takes a hit. Only two starters are back from a tough unit.	This team still is in transition as it tries to redefine run-and-shoot approach.
6. San Jose St.	Dick Tomey has taken perennial cellar-dweller and made it competitive.	No matter how much progress is made, mistakes keep them down.	Coaching staff has enough talent on both sides to be competitive.
7. New Mexico St.	Luring DeWayne Walker from UCLA was an impressive coaching upgrade.	Replacing longtime quarterback Chase Holbrook could prove daunting.	In hiring Walker, the Aggies get an "A" for aspiration. Keep an eye on Las Cruces.
8. Idaho	Third-year coach Robb Akey has stabilized a program that was an ungodly mess.	Anybody who thinks three years is long enough to rebuild this thing is wrong. Try five.	They will be better, but a sixth-place finish would represent major success.
9. Utah State	Nineteen starters return, including 10 on steadily improving offense.	Gary Andersen might be great, but it's another coaching transition in Logan.	There's reason to think they should be much better, but history says it's just not gonna happen.

Lindy's 2009 ALL-WAC Team

OFFENSE - First Team

QB	Colin Kaepernick	Jr.	Nevada
RB	Daniel Porter	Sr.	Louisiana Tech
RB	Vai Taua	Jr.	Nevada
WR	Greg Salas	Jr.	Hawaii
WR	Marcus Anderson	Sr.	New Mexico St.
TE	Virgil Green	Jr.	Nevada
C	John Estes	Sr.	Hawaii
OL	Andrew Jackson	Jr.	Fresno State
OL	Mike Iupati	Sr.	Idaho
OL	Rob McGill	Jr.	Louisiana Tech
OL	Alonzo Durham	Sr.	Nevada
AP	Phillip Livas	Jr.	Louisiana Tech
PK	Kyle Brotzman	Jr.	Boise State

DEFENSE - First Team

DL	Kevin Basped	Jr.	Nevada
DL	D'Anthony Smith	Sr.	Louisiana Tech
DL	Chris Carter	Jr.	Fresno State
DL	Carl Ihenacho	Sr.	San Jose State
LB	Nick Paden	Sr.	New Mexico St.
LB	Ben Jacobs	Jr.	Fresno State
LB	Paul Igboeli	Sr.	Utah State
DB	Kyle Wilson	Sr.	Boise State
DB	Antonio Baker	Sr.	Louisiana Tech
DB	Jeron Johnson	Jr.	Boise State
DB	Moses Harris	Sr.	Fresno State
P	Bradley Langley	Jr.	Nevada

OFFENSE - Second Team

QB	Kellen Moore	So.	Boise State
RB	Deonte Jackson	Jr.	Idaho
RB	Lonyae Miller	Sr.	Fresno State
WR	Seyi Ajirotutu	Sr.	Fresno State
WR	Kevin Jurovich	Sr.	San Jose State
TE	Dennis Morris	Sr.	Louisiana Tech
C	Thomas Byrd	So.	Boise State
OL	Brennan McFadden	Sr.	Utah State
OL	Chuck Taylor	Jr.	New Mexico St.
OL	Ben Harris	Sr.	Louisiana Tech
OL	Mike Gallett	Jr.	Nevada
AP	Kama Bailey	So.	Idaho
PK	Kevin Goessling	So.	Fresno State

DEFENSE - Second Team

DL	Dontay Moch	Jr.	Nevada
DL	Ryan Winterswyk	Jr.	Boise State
DL	John Fonoti	Sr.	Hawaii
DL	Faleoga Faumui	Sr.	Idaho
LB	Justin Cole	Sr.	San Jose State
LB	Brashton Satele	Sr.	Hawaii
LB	Jason Scott	Sr.	New Mexico St.
DB	Shiloh Keo	Jr.	Idaho
DB	Davon House	Jr.	New Mexico St.
DB	Duke Ihenacho	Jr.	San Jose State
DB	Jeron Johnson	Jr.	Boise State
P	Robert Malone	So.	Fresno State

THE BIG ONES

Sept. 3	Oregon at Boise State
Sept. 5	Nevada at Notre Dame
Sept. 18	Boise State at Fresno State
Sept. 25	Missouri at Nevada
Oct. 14	Boise State at Tulsa
Oct. 24	Boise State at Hawaii
Oct. 31	New Mexico State at Ohio State
Nov. 6	Boise State at Louisiana Tech
Nov. 14	Louisiana Tech at LSU
Nov. 28	Navy at Hawaii

Bowl Connections

Champion
Humanitarian Bowl vs. ACC

WAC #2
Hawaii Bowl vs. Conference USA

WAC #3
New Mexico Bowl vs. Mountain West

TOP 10 NFL TALENT

1. Colin Kaepernick	QB	Jr.	Nevada	Fifth person to rush for 1,000, pass for 2,000 yards.
2. Kellen Moore	QB	So.	Boise State	Sets school completion mark with 69.4 percentage.
3. Kyle Wilson	DB	Sr.	Boise State	Tops in conference with five picks, 10 pass breakups.
4. Vai Taua	RB	Jr.	Nevada	Led league with 1,521 rushing yards, 15 touchdowns.
5. Daniel Porter	RB	Sr.	Louisiana Tech	Second in conference in rushing with 1,164 yards.
6. Nick Paden	LB	Sr.	New Mexico St.	Top returning tackler in WAC with 8.9 per game.
7. Duke Ihenacho	DB	Jr.	San Jose State	Returned two of five interceptions for touchdowns.
8. Phillip Livas	WR	Jr.	Louisiana Tech	Top all-purpose man with 155.0 yards per game.
9. Kevin Jurovich	WR	Sr.	San Jose State	Top returning wideout in 2007 back from injury.
10. Kyle Brotzman	PK	Jr.	Boise State	One of the most consistent kickers in the country.

Most Valuable Player	Offensive Player of the Year	Defensive Player of the Year	Newcomer of the Year
Colin Kaepernick QB, Nevada	Kellen Moore QB, Boise State	Kyle Wilson DB, Boise State	Donnie Pritchett DL, Fresno State

HONOR ROLL

Most Accurate Passer	Kellen Moore	Boise State
Strongest Arm	Colin Kaepernick	Nevada
Best Scrambler	Colin Kaepernick	Nevada
Coolest in the Clutch	Kellen Moore	Boise State
Toughest to Bring Down	Vai Taua, RB	Nevada
Best Hands	Greg Salas, WR	Hawaii
Most Dangerous Deep Threat	Seyi Ajirotutu, WR	Fresno State
Best Pass Blocker	John Estes, C	Hawaii
Best Run Blocker	Andrew Jackson, OG	Fresno State
Best Pass Rusher	Dontay Moch, DE	Nevada
Best Cover Corner	Kyle Wilson	Boise State
Special Teams Demon	A.J. Jefferson	Fresno State

BOISE STATE BRONCOS

NATIONAL RANK 13

WAC rank: 1 | Record: 12-1 | WAC record: 8-0 (1st) | Stadium: Bronco Stadium (32,000)

Broncos in A Box

COACH: Chris Petersen — At Boise State and overall: 35-4, 3 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bryan Harsin
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Justin Wilcox
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2008
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2001
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 6 offense, 5 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Kellen Moore, WR Titus Young, WR Austin Pettis, TB Jeremy Avery, C Thomas Byrd, CB Kyle Wilson, S Jeron Johnson, DE Ryan Winterswyk
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The passing attack should be explosive with the accurate throws and sharp reads of quarterback Kellen Moore and playmaking of wideouts Austin Pettis and Titus Young. The pass defense should be stingy because the defense is loaded at end and in the secondary.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The offensive line never clicked last season and the personnel hasn't changed much, so that is the No. 1 issue on this team. The Broncos also must overcome a recent habit of following exceptional seasons with ordinary ones.

OFFENSE

The Broncos averaged 49 points per game in their final five regular-season games last season — and much of that offense returns.

The leader is sophomore quarterback Kellen Moore, who earned WAC Freshman of the Year honors and set a school record by completing 69.4 percent of his passes. He has two proven weapons on the outside in junior wide receivers Austin Pettis and Titus Young.

Pettis is a terrific leaper who has been difficult to handle on intermediate routes and in the red zone. Young, who has blazing speed, was suspended for 10 games last season and was sorely missed as a deep threat.

The Broncos hope to spark the running game this year after averaging, by their standards, a mere 152.3 yards per game in 2008.

Junior tailbacks D.J. Harper and Jeremy Avery possess big-play speed and every-down toughness. Avery spent the past two seasons as the ultra-quick changeup to Ian Johnson, averaging 6.0 yards per carry. They'll run behind a much-maligned line that never clicked last season but returns three starters and three others with starting experience.

Sophomore center Thomas Byrd is a strong candidate for All-WAC honors, but the rest of the line is a work in progress.

DEFENSE

The defense stepped up in 2008, allowing 12.6 points and 308.2 yards per game, and forcing 33 turnovers. But the season ended on a supremely sour note.

TCU rushed for 275 yards and controlled the ball for more than 36 minutes to beat Boise State 17-16 in the Poinsettia Bowl.

The defense could be better this year. Just five starters return, but several more players with quality experience and perhaps bigger upsides than the players they replace are ready to take over.

On the line, for example, the only returning starter is All-WAC end Ryan Winterswyk (11.5 tackles for loss). He's joined by Freshman All-American tackle Billy Winn (5.5 tackles for loss), sophomore end Byron Hout (four sacks, an interception in the bowl) and sophomore tackle Chase Baker (a spring standout).

At linebacker, the two starting spots are wide open. Sophomore Hunter White made a move in the spring, separating himself from a group that includes former starter Derrell Acrey, walk-on J.C. Percy and junior college transfer Daron Mackey, who is recovering from a knee injury.

The star of the secondary is senior cornerback Kyle Wilson, who returned to finish school and improve his NFL stock. Safeties Jeron Johnson and George Iloka and cornerback Brandyn Thompson also are standouts — and none is a senior.

The opening is at nickel, which has become a full-time role. Former tailback Doug Martin is the leading candidate.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Junior kicker/punter Kyle Brotzman was nearly spotless on field goals in 2007, but he was inconsistent last year. As a punter, his rollout style nullified opposing return men and allowed the Broncos to rank fourth in the nation in net punting.

Kyle Wilson earned second-team All-America honors as a punt returner, averaging 14.2 yards and tying for the national lead with three touchdowns, including a 90-yarder.

OVERVIEW

The Broncos will set the tone in the opener — a home game against Oregon. Win, and they're the frontrunner to crash the BCS. Lose, and they're still the favorites to win their seventh WAC title in eight years. The deciding factor likely will be the lines, which were exposed by TCU in the Poinsettia Bowl.

Photo by Dennis Hubbard

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Kellen Moore***	**6-0**	**184**	**So.**
	Mike Coughlin	6-5	220	Jr.
TB	Jeremy Avery	5-9	171	Jr.
	D.J. Harper	5-9	192	Jr.
FB	**Richie Brockel***	**6-2**	**244**	**Sr.**
	Dan Paul	6-0	235	So.
TE	**Tommy Gallarda***	**6-5**	**250**	**Jr.**
	Kyle Efaw	6-4	232	So.
WR	Austin Pettis	6-3	200	Jr.
	Tyler Shoemaker	6-1	214	So.
WR	Titus Young	5-11	167	Jr.
	Mitch Burroughs	5-9	194	Fr.
LT	Matt Slater	6-4	289	Jr.
	Garrett Pendergast	6-4	284	So.
LG	Cory Yriarte	6-1	284	So.
	Chuck Hayes	6-2	277	So.
C	**Thomas Byrd***	**5-11**	**282**	**So.**
	Bronson Durrant	6-3	258	Fr.
RG	**Kevin Sapien***	**6-4**	**272**	**Jr.**
	Will Lawrence	6-2	291	Jr.
RT	**Nate Potter***	**6-6**	**281**	**So.**
	Michael Ames	6-4	267	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Ryan Winterswyk***	**6-4**	**260**	**Jr.**
	Jarrell Root	6-3	243	So.
DT	Chase Baker	6-1	293	So.
	Michael Atkinson	6-0	324	Fr.
DT	Billy Winn	6-4	279	So.
	Greg Grimes	6-0	270	Fr.
DE	Byron Hout	6-0	241	So.
	Shea McClellin	6-3	262	So.
LB	Hunter White	5-11	215	So.
	J.C. Percy	6-0	211	Fr.
LB	Derrell Acrey	6-1	233	Jr.
	Daron Mackey	5-11	227	Jr.
CB	**Kyle Wilson***	**5-10**	**187**	**Sr.**
	Garcia Day	6-1	199	Sr.
CB	**Brandyn Thompson***	**5-10**	**178**	**Jr.**
	Jamar Taylor	5-11	191	So.
S	**Jeron Johnson***	**5-11**	**190**	**Jr.**
	Travis Stanaway	5-11	183	So.
S	**George Iloka***	**6-3**	**210**	**So.**
	Cedric Febis	6-3	195	So.
S	Doug Martin	5-10	204	So.
	Jason Robinson	5-11	201	Jr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Kyle Brotzman***	**5-10**	**191**	**Jr.**
P	**Kyle Brotzman***	**5-10**	**191**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 3	OREGON
Sept. 12	MIAMI (OH)
Sept. 18	at Fresno State
Sept. 26	at Bowling Green
Oct. 3	UC DAVIS
Oct. 14	at Tulsa
Oct. 24	at Hawaii
Oct. 31	SAN JOSE STATE
Nov. 6	at Louisiana Tech
Nov. 14	IDAHO
Nov. 20	at Utah State
Nov. 27	NEVADA
Dec. 5	NEW MEXICO STATE

2008 Results

(12-1, 8-0)

W	IDAHO STATE	49-7
W	BOWLING GREEN	20-7
W	at Oregon	37-32
W	LOUISIANA TECH	38-3
W	at Southern Miss	24-7
W	HAWAII	27-7
W	at San Jose State	33-16
W	at New Mexico State	49-0
W	UTAH STATE	49-14
W	at Idaho	45-10
W	at Nevada	41-34
W	FRESNO STATE	61-10
	Poinsettia Bowl	
L	vs. TCU	16-17

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	37.6	12
Rushing	152.3	54
Passing	288.5	13
Total	440.9	18
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	12.6	3
Rushing	118.0	22
Passing	190.2	34
Total	308.2	20
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 7	+ 0.54	25

NEVADA WOLF PACK

NATIONAL RANK 69

WAC rank: 2 | Record: 7-6 | WAC record: 5-3 (T-3rd) | Stadium: Mackay Stadium (29,993)

Wolf Pack in A Box

COACH: Chris Ault — At Nevada and overall: 198-91-1, 24 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Chris Klenakis
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Nigel Burton
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2005, WAC co-champs
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2004
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 7 offense, 7 defense, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Vai Taua, RB Luke Lippincott, QB Colin Kaepernick, DE Dontay Moch, DE Kevin Basped, FS Jonathon Amaya, WR Chris Wellington, OL Mike Gallett
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Offense, offense and, oh yeah, offense. Kaepernick is the reigning Offensive Player of the Year in the WAC. The Pack has the WAC's leading rusher from last season (Taua) and from two years ago (Lippincott).
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The growing pains from the switch to a 4-3 defensive alignment were on display at times last season as Nevada lost – and won – several shootouts. The loss of Marko Mitchell and Mike McCoy will leave the receiving duties in some young hands.

OFFENSE

Moving the ball and scoring points has never been a problem for the Wolf Pack. It will be an even easier task in 2009.

Nevada returns the WAC's Offensive Player of the Year in quarterback Colin Kaepernick, who threw for 2,849 yards and 22 touchdowns while throwing only seven interceptions.

Nevada became the conference's most dangerous offense, along with Boise State, averaging 37.6 points per game.

Kaepernick, however, will have to contend with the loss of his two top receivers. Marko Mitchell and Mike McCoy combined for 1,733 yards and 12 touchdowns.

Junior Chris Wellington emerged as a threat last season with 632 receiving yards and six touchdowns. Wellington is joined by a stable of young wideouts that include redshirt freshman Brandon Wimberly and sophomore Tray Session.

The passing game might be second fiddle anyway to what should be a prolific running attack. Junior Vai Taua led the league in rushing with 117 yards per game and was second in the conference in rushing touchdowns — to Kaepernick — with 15.

Taua, with 1,521 yards, was first-team All-WAC after the fourth-best rushing year in school history.

He did most of that after a knee injury sidelined Luke Lippincott, the conference's leading runner in 2007, in the second game of 2008.

Lippincott is healthy again and there's reason to believe he will be the runner he was in 2007, when he rushed for 1,420 yards and 18 touchdowns while being named to the All-WAC first team.

DEFENSE

Nevada found itself in many shootouts last season, allowing opponents to score 30 points or more in seven of its 13 games. The Wolf Pack went just 1-6 in those contests, including a 42-35 loss to Maryland in the Humanitarian Bowl.

Some of the problems can be blamed on growing pains. Nevada employed a 4-3 defensive alignment for the first time. Seven defensive starters are back, all well schooled in the formation, so look for a unit that is a little less susceptible to the big play.

Dontay Moch and Kevin Basped return at defensive end after leading the team in sacks a year ago. Moch had 11.5. Basped had 10.

Jonathon Amaya, who led the team in interceptions (four) and tied for the lead in tackles (68), is back at free safety. Experience is a necessity in the secondary after Nevada finished last nationally in pass defense last season. Antoine Thompson also returns to the secondary.

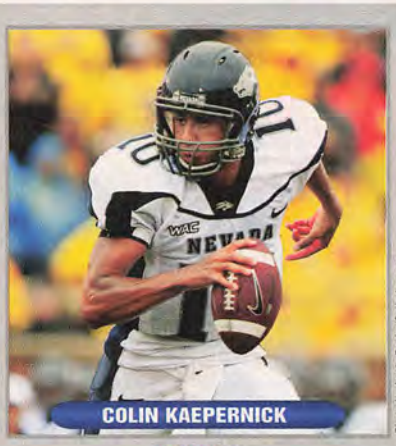
Nevada hopes linebackers James-Michael Johnson and Brandon Marshall can come of age after encouraging freshman seasons. Johnson finished sixth on the team in tackles with 49, while Marshall gathered 33 in six starts.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Punter Brad Langley is back after averaging 44-yards per attempt. Nevada will rely on junior Ricky Drake, an unproved junior college transfer from Los Angeles, to handle the placekicking duties.

OVERVIEW

The Wolf Pack has enjoyed four consecutive bowl appearances, but would love a conference title, although it plays league favorite Boise State on the road. The offense should be outstanding again, but improvement in the record will depend on the defense continuing to grow in the 4-3 system.



COLIN KAEPERNICK

Photo by Jamie Squire/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Colin Kaepernick***	**6-6**	**215**	**Jr.**
	Tyler Lantrip	6-4	220	So.
RB	**Vai Taua***	**5-10**	**225**	**Jr.**
	Luke Lippincott	6-2	215	Sr.
WR	Brandon Wimberly	6-3	195	Fr.
	Dwayne Sanders	5-10	175	Sr.
WR	**Chris Wellington***	**6-1**	**185**	**Jr.**
	Malcolm Shepherd	6-3	210	Jr.
WR	Tray Session	6-3	175	So.
	Maurice Patterson	6-3	200	Jr.
TE	**Virgil Green***	**6-5**	**225**	**Jr.**
	Kevin Bohr	6-3	240	Sr.
LT	**Mike Gallett***	**6-6**	**295**	**Jr.**
	Steve Haley	6-5	305	So.
LG	**John Bender***	**6-8**	**325**	**Jr.**
	Steve Werner	6-5	310	Fr.
C	Kenneth Ackerman	6-4	280	Sr.
	Jeff Meads	6-3	290	So.
RG	Chris Barker	6-4	315	Fr.
	Amini Silatolu	6-4	295	Jr.
RT	**Alonzo Durham***	**6-4**	**285**	**Sr.**
	Jose Acuna	6-6	308	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Dontay Moch***	**6-1**	**245**	**Jr.**
	Ryan Coulson	6-3	255	Jr.
DT	Chris Slack	6-5	270	Sr.
	Zack Madonick	6-1	285	So.
DT	**Nate Agaiava***	**6-2**	**285**	**Sr.**
	Mike Andrews	6-3	275	So.
DE	**Kevin Basped***	**6-6**	**240**	**Jr.**
	Daniel Agaiava	6-3	275	Sr.
LB	**James Michael-Johnson***	**6-2**	**220**	**So.**
	Kevin Grimes	6-0	190	Jr.
LB	Mike Bethea	6-3	245	Jr.
	Jared Silva-Purcell	5-11	220	Jr.
LB	**Brandon Marshall***	**6-1**	**230**	**So.**
	Adam Liranzo	6-4	220	Jr.
CB	**Antoine Thompson***	**6-1**	**195**	**Sr.**
	Thaddeus Brown	5-11	175	Fr.
CB	Isaiah Frey	6-0	190	So.
	Khalid Wooten	6-0	195	Fr.
SS	Mo Harvey	6-3	210	Sr.
	Cameron Bayne	6-1	180	Sr.
FS	**Jonathon Amaya***	**6-2**	**190**	**Sr.**
	Marlon Johnson	5-11	185	Fr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Ricky Drake	6-0	190	Jr.
P	**Brad Langley***	**6-0**	**200**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	at Notre Dame
Sept. 19	at Colorado State
Sept. 25	MISSOURI
Oct. 3	UNLV
Oct. 9	LOUISIANA TECH
Oct. 17	at Utah State
Oct. 24	IDAHO
Oct. 31	HAWAII
Nov. 8	at San Jose State
Nov. 14	FRESNO STATE
Nov. 21	at New Mexico State
Nov. 27	at Boise State

2008 Results

(7-6, 5-3)

W	GRAMBLING STATE	49-13
L	TEXAS TECH	19-35
L	at Missouri	17-69
W	at UNLV	49-27
W	at Idaho	49-14
L	NEW MEXICO STATE	45-48
W	UTAH STATE	44-17
L	at Hawaii	31-38
W	at Fresno State	41-28
W	SAN JOSE STATE	41-17
L	BOISE STATE	34-41
W	at Louisiana Tech	35-31
	Humanitarian Bowl	
L	vs. Maryland	35-42

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	37.6	12
Rushing	277.8	3
Passing	230.8	47
Total	508.5	5
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	32.3	99
Rushing	88.6	6
Passing	311.6	119
Total	400.2	91
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 1	+ 0.08	58

LOUISIANA TECH BULLDOGS

NATIONAL RANK 75

WAC rank: 3 | Record: 8-5 | WAC record: 5-3 (T-2nd) | Stadium: Joe Aillet Stadium (30,600)

Bulldogs in A Box

COACH: Derek Dooley — At Louisiana Tech and overall: 13-12, 2 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Frank Scelfo
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tommy Spangler
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2001
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 9 offense, 6 defense
PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Daniel Porter, WR/KR Phillip Livas, LT Rob McGill, DT D'Anthony Smith, FS Antonio Baker, QB Ross Jenkins
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The defensive line makes Louisiana Tech as good against the run as anyone in the league. Experience on offense with nine returning starters is a plus, especially with five returners on the offensive line and Porter, who could become the school's all-time leading rusher this fall.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The passing game — throwing on offense and defending it on defense — is a big concern. A largely untested linebacking corps and secondary will have to perform better in 2009. A new kicker and new punter could hurt what was a great special teams unit last year.

OFFENSE

Since Louisiana Tech surprised the Western Athletic Conference with an eight-win season and an Independence Bowl victory, it gets a pass on its abysmal throwing game in 2008.

With essentially the same pieces to work with — Tech returns nine starters on offense — the goal is improving last year's league-worst average of 156 passing yards per game.

Junior quarterback Ross Jenkins will be under center again after going 6-2 as a starter in 2008. He was more of a game manager than playmaker last year, averaging 105 passing yards per game with seven touchdowns and three interceptions. He will be asked to take a few more chances.

His targets include electric wide receiver/return specialist Phillip Livas, who had 2,015 all-purpose yards.

Senior running back Daniel Porter is the star, coming off a first-team All-WAC season in which he rushed for more than 1,100 yards and nine touchdowns. He needs 1,122 yards to become the school's all-time leading rusher.

A big reason for Porter's potential success in 2009 is the return of five starters on the line, plus a sixth player who had six starts there a season ago. Left tackle Rob McGill is the best of the bunch and should contend for all-league honors.

DEFENSE

The front four should be the strength of the defense, anchored by returning starting tackle D'Anthony "Boo" Smith. The first-team All-WAC pick had five sacks and 65 tackles to help lead a defense that allowed just 104 rushing yards per game, second-best in the WAC and 13th in the country.

Fellow defensive tackle Mason Hitt is also a returning starter and will help Smith make running up the middle on the Bulldogs a tough task.

Like the offense, though, the focus for the defense will be in the air, where the Bulldogs were bad in 2008. Louisiana Tech allowed 272.7 passing yards per game, second worst in the league and 113th in the country.

The secondary will rely on a pair of returning starters in strong safety Deon Young and free safety Antonio Baker to spearhead the effort against the pass.

Brian White returns at strongside linebacker after an injury-shortened 2008 season. He is the only returning starter at linebacker, a unit that benefits greatly from the strong defensive line.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Bulldogs a year ago ranked in the top 25 nationally in kickoffs, kick returns, punting and punt returns.

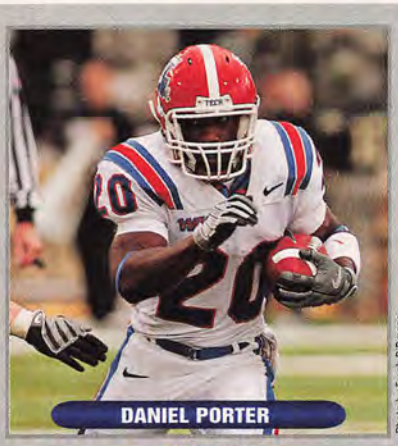
The return game is in the good hands of junior Phillip Livas. He averaged more than 15 yards per punt return and 25 yards per kick return en route to a first-team All-WAC selection as a return specialist a year ago.

A pair of untested redshirt freshmen — kicker John Hinton and punter Cade Glasgow — take over the kicking duties.

OVERVIEW

Louisiana Tech led the WAC with a plus-nine turnover margin in 2008 thanks to a defense that took some chances and an offense that didn't. Both could change some in 2009.

Head coach Derek Dooley has vowed to get better in the passing game on both sides of the ball. The path to improvement is easier on an offense with nine returning starters. If the defense — stellar up front — improves against the pass, the Bulldogs could end up on the right side of the bowl cut.



DANIEL PORTER

Photo by Frank DiBrango

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Ross Jenkins***	**6-3**	**212**	**Jr.**
	Randy Hardin	6-0	195	So.
RB	**Daniel Porter***	**5-9**	**190**	**Sr.**
	Myke Compton	5-8	193	Sr.
FB	Dustin Mitchell	6-4	252	Sr.
	Roosevelt Falls	6-1	220	Jr.
WR	**Phillip Livas***	**5-8**	**175**	**Jr.**
	Richie Casey	5-11	175	Fr.
WR	Houston Tuminello	6-0	173	So.
	R.P. Stuart	6-3	205	So.
TE	**Dennis Morris***	**6-2**	**266**	**Sr.**
	Chandler Spence	6-3	247	Fr.
LT	**Rob McGill***	**6-6**	**305**	**Jr.**
	Michael Lacy	6-4	283	Fr.
LG	**Ben Harris***	**6-4**	**295**	**Sr.**
	Kevin Saia	6-2	306	Fr.
C	**Lon Roberts***	**6-3**	**277**	**Jr.**
	Steven Warner	6-0	300	Fr.
RG	**Jared Miles***	**6-3**	**324**	**Jr.**
	Kris Cavitt	6-2	285	So.
RT	**Cudahy Harmon***	**6-6**	**327**	**Jr.**
	Josh Parrish	6-3	280	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
LE	**Matt Broha***	**6-4**	**228**	**So.**
	Randy Grigsby	6-3	245	Jr.
LT	**Mason Hitt***	**6-1**	**268**	**Jr.**
	Philip Longino	6-0	270	So.
RT	**D'Anthony Smith***	**6-2**	**300**	**Sr.**
	Adrian Logan	6-2	251	Jr.
RE	Christian Lacey	6-1	230	So.
	Kwame Jordan	6-4	245	Sr.
WLB	Dusty Rust	6-3	215	So.
	Dominique Faust	5-11	190	Jr.
MLB	Adrien Cole	5-11	245	So.
	Soloman Randle	5-11	239	Fr.
SLB	**Brian White***	**6-1**	**228**	**Sr.**
	Kiamni Washington	6-2	225	Jr.
CB	Terry Carter	5-10	183	So.
	Josh Victorian	5-10	180	Jr.
CB	Olajuwon Paige	5-9	180	Jr.
	Darrius Terry	5-11	170	So.
SS	**Deon Young***	**5-11**	**197**	**Sr.**
	Tarence Calais	5-11	200	Jr.
FS	**Antonio Baker***	**5-11**	**200**	**Sr.**
	Shawn Simmons	6-0	205	Sr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	John Hinton	5-11	170	Fr.
P	Cade Glasgow	6-0	180	Fr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	at Auburn
Sept. 12	at Navy
Sept. 19	NICHOLLS STATE
Sept. 30	HAWAII
Oct. 9	at Nevada
Oct. 17	NEW MEXICO STATE
Oct. 24	at Utah State
Oct. 31	at Idaho
Nov. 6	BOISE STATE
Nov. 14	at LSU
Nov. 21	at Fresno State
Dec. 5	SAN JOSE STATE

2008 Results

(8-5, 5-3)

W	MISSISSIPPI STATE	22-14
L	at Kansas	0-29
W	SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA	41-26
L	at Boise State	3-38
L	at Hawaii	14-24
W	IDAHO	46-14
L	at Army	7-14
W	FRESNO STATE	38-35
W	at San Jose State	21-0
W	UTAH STATE	45-38
W	at New Mexico State	35-31
L	NEVADA	31-35
	Independence Bowl	
W	vs. Northern Illinois	17-10

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.6	72
Rushing	187.1	27
Passing	156.0	102
Total	343.1	75
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	23.7	52
Rushing	103.9	13
Passing	272.7	113
Total	376.5	73
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 9	+ 0.69	19

FRESNO STATE BULLDOGS

NATIONAL RANK 76

WAC rank: 4 | Record: 7-6 | WAC record: 4-4 (T-5th) | Stadium: Bulldog Stadium (41,031)

Bulldogs in A Box

COACH: Pat Hill — At Fresno State and overall, 95-61; 12 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Derek Frazier and Jeff Grady
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Randy Stewart
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1999
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2006
RETURNING STARTERS: 18; 7 offense, 9 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Ryan Mathews, WR Seyi Ajirotutu, OL Andrew Jackson, DB Moses Harris, DL Chris Carter, LB Ben Jacobs
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Bulldogs have all four of the top running backs returning, including Ryan Mathews and Lonyae Miller. Always considered a running team, the Bulldogs may be even more so this year with an inexperienced quarterback under center. The defense returns several prominent starters, including All-WAC performers Ben Jacobs at linebacker and Moses Harris at strong safety.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: With the loss of quarterback Tom Brandstater, a sixth-round NFL pick by the Denver Broncos, the balanced attack Pat Hill could present each game in 2008 is gone. What's left is some unproved talent under center and a possible one-dimensional attack until someone steps forward to claim the job.

OFFENSE

Quarterback Tom Brandstater is gone to the NFL, but head coach Pat Hill has such a vaunted running attack, you wonder why throw?

The top four rushers are back, including Lonyae Miller and Anthony Harding, who combined for 1,634 yards and 13 touchdowns last season. Ryan Mathews — who rushed for 606 yards in eight games — is set to return from injury. This is a very good unit.

Junior center Joe Bernardi and right guard Andrew Jackson provide a good nucleus up front. Hill has to replace both tackles and standout tight end Bear Pascoe, but said during the spring he has some rangy prospects who will be fit for duty.

Both wideouts return in Seyi Ajirotutu and Marlon Moore, but finding the right quarterback will be the biggest challenge.

Fresno State auditioned three guys in the spring — Ryan Colburn, Derek Carr and Ebahn Feathers, who runs the option effectively — but nothing was resolved. They were listed as tri-starters on the official post-spring depth chart, setting up a spirited battle in fall camp.

DEFENSE

The Bulldogs are talented up front with the return of end Chris Carter and linebacker Ben Jacobs.

Both were named second-team All-WAC last year, with Carter finishing second on the team with 88 tackles, including 3.5 sacks. Jacobs was Fresno State's leading tackler with 113. Both figure to be first-team all-conference this season.

With a foundation like that up front, Fresno State should be better at rushing defense than last season, when it allowed 210 yards per game.

The Bulldogs have another all-star in the secondary. Senior strong safety Moses Harris is an all-around player, capable of supporting the run and dropping back into pass coverages. He loves dogging the tight end.

In all, nine defensive starters return, including all three linebackers and three defensive backs. Hill wants to mold this experience and talent into a group that can once again be enforcers on this side of the ball.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Punter Robert Malone and placekicker Kevin Goessling return. The two sophomores made a quick transition to major-college football last year.

Malone averaged 42.8 yards on 54 punts. He downed 20 inside the 20, forced seven fair catches and had only five touchbacks. Goessling hit 15 of 22 field goals and missed only one PAT in 47 attempts.

The return game is stellar. Senior A.J. Jefferson is back to return kickoffs, where he ruled the WAC last year with 31 returns for a 29.3-yard average, including a 92-yard score.

Punt return man Chastin West is also back. He averaged 16.2 yards a return last year, including one from 49 yards for a touchdown.

OVERVIEW

Fresno State will be challenged this season to overcome the disappointment of 2008. The Bulldogs had hoped to follow Boise State and Hawaii to a BCS bid, but another underachieving finish killed that plan.

The Bulldogs have talent on both sides of the football, but winning the hearts and minds of his players — and, subsequently, pulling off a few Fresno State-style upsets — will be Hill's top priority.

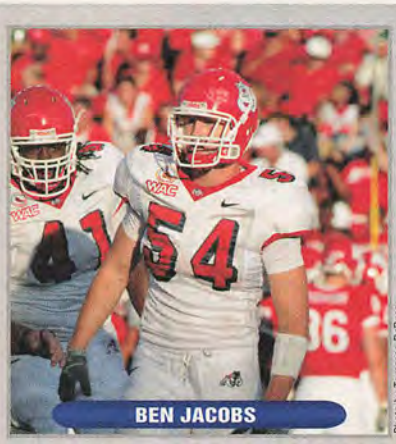

BEN JACOBS

Photo by Tomasso DeRosa

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Ryan Colburn	6-3	220	Jr.
	Derek Carr	6-3	190	Fr.
TB	Lonyae Miller	5-11	215	Sr.
	Ryan Mathews*	**5-11**	**210**	**Jr.**
FB	Reynard Camp	5-11	270	Jr.
	Dylan Cruz	5-11	225	Fr.
WR	**Seyi Ajirotutu***	**6-3**	**210**	**Sr.**
	Marlon Moore*	**6-1**	**185**	**Sr.**
WR	Chastin West	6-1	215	Sr.
	Devon Wylie	5-9	170	Jr.
TE	**Vince Pascoe***	**6-0**	**230**	**Jr.**
	Ryan Skidmore	6-5	240	So.
LT	Bryce Harris	6-6	295	So.
	Austin Wentworth	6-5	305	Fr.
LG	Matt Hunt	6-2	315	Fr.
	Charley Robbins	6-2	300	So.
C	**Joe Bernardi***	**6-2**	**290**	**Jr.**
	Richard Pacheco	6-2	285	Sr.
RG	**Andrew Jackson***	**6-5**	**295**	**Jr.**
	Richard Helepiko	6-2	290	Fr.
RT	**Devon Cunningham***	**6-6**	**350**	**Jr.**
	Kenny Wiggins	6-7	310	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Chris Carter***	**6-2**	**230**	**Jr.**
	Matt Akers	6-2	225	Fr.
NT	Chase McEntee	6-3	285	So.
	Mark Roberts*	**6-2**	**300**	**Jr.**
DT	Logan Harrell	6-2	275	So.
	Cornell Banks*	**6-3**	**305**	**Jr.**
DE	Kenny Borg	6-3	245	So.
	Chris Lewis	6-3	260	Jr.
LB	**Kyle Knox***	**6-1**	**215**	**So.**
	Shawn Plummer	6-0	200	So.
LB	**Ben Jacobs***	**6-3**	**240**	**Jr.**
	Eric Brown	5-11	210	So.
LB	**Nico Herron***	**6-3**	**240**	**Jr.**
	Frank Manquero	6-1	190	Sr.
CB	A.J. Jefferson	6-0	190	Sr.
	Damion Owens	5-11	200	Sr.
CB	**Desia Dunn***	**5-9**	**190**	**Jr.**
	Isaiah Green	5-10	180	So.
SS	**Moses Harris***	**5-11**	**205**	**Sr.**
	Marvin Haynes	6-1	205	Sr.
FS	**Lorne Bell***	**5-10**	**200**	**Jr.**
	Phillip Thomas	6-0	205	Fr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Kevin Goessling***	**6-0**	**190**	**So.**
P	**Robert Malone***	**6-2**	**225**	**So.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	UC DAVIS
Sept. 12	at Wisconsin
Sept. 18	BOISE STATE
Sept. 26	at Cincinnati
Oct. 10	at Hawaii
Oct. 17	SAN JOSE STATE
Oct. 24	at New Mexico State
Oct. 31	UTAH STATE
Nov. 7	at Idaho
Nov. 14	at Nevada
Nov. 21	LOUISIANA TECH
Dec. 5	at Illinois

2008 Results

(7-6, 4-4)

W	at Rutgers	24-7
L	WISCONSIN	10-13
W	at Toledo (OT)	55-54
W	at UCLA	36-31
L	HAWAII (OT)	29-32
W	IDAHO	45-32
W	at Utah State	30-28
L	at Louisiana Tech	35-38
L	NEVADA	28-41
W	NEW MEXICO STATE	24-17
W	at San Jose State	24-10
L	at Boise State	10-61
	New Mexico Bowl	
L	vs. Colorado State	35-40

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	29.6	37
Rushing	182.3	32
Passing	204.9	66
Total	387.2	43
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	31.1	92
Rushing	210.0	108
Passing	200.9	51
Total	410.9	97
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 11	- 0.85	107

HAWAII WARRIORS

NATIONAL RANK 89

WAC rank: 5 | Record: 7-7 | WAC record: 5-3 (T-2nd) | Stadium: Aloha Stadium (50,000)

Warriors in A Box

COACH: Greg McMackin — At Hawaii and overall: 7-7, 1 year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ron Lee
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Cal Lee
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1999, co-champs
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2005
RETURNING STARTERS: 9; 7 offense, 2 defense
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Greg Alexander, OL John Estes, WR Greg Salas, RB Leon Wright-Jackson, LB Brashton Satele, DL John Fonoti
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Hawaii returns the nucleus of an offense that should be much-improved. The 2008 season was one of transition at wideout and quarterback, but those problems were solved in the spring, leaving the Warriors a more productive unit.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Nine starters are gone from defense. Capable backups with extensive playing time are ready to step in at some spots, but replacing Solomon Elimimian, the second-leading tackler in the history of the WAC, will be a challenge.

OFFENSE

It took about half a season before junior college transfer Greg Alexander got comfortable in the run-and-shoot. While he was going through his paces, there was the problem of replacing all four wideouts as well.

Alexander still threw for 1,895 yards and 14 touchdowns. That's nothing compared to the crazy numbers of his predecessor — Colt Brennan — but not bad for the first time through the system.

Head coach Greg McMackin likes his chances offensively with Alexander more seasoned, plus there are six other returning starters and several capable youngsters waiting in the wings.

The offense was one-dimensional under former head coach June Jones. That's something McMackin has tried to change. He believes in rushing the football, developing a line capable of run blocking and pass protecting effectively. Center John Estes is one of the best nationally at his position.

The O-line improved greatly this spring under the watchful eye of new assistant Gordy Shaw. As McMackin put it, "We're not going to set another record for quarterback sacks." Hawaii allowed 57 last season, the most in the nation.

Hawaii moved quarterback Inoke Funaki to running back, a move that suits the senior, who is a perfect fit in a Wildcat formation. Look for Hawaii to be balanced. The Warriors will still throw, just not on every down.

DEFENSE

The Warriors used a platoon system last year that had plenty of rotation in the front seven.

But when you lose second-round NFL draft pick David Veikune up front, third-round selection Ryan Mouton at corner and the all-time leading tackler in school history in linebacker Solomon Elimimian, there's cause for concern.

"We have some guys coming back who we believe will fill those holes and some guys coming in this fall who will help us," McMackin said. "But we did lose several quality players who will be tough to replace."

Defensive end John Fonoti could help cushion the blow. He made 62 tackles, including nine for loss and 3.5 sacks, last season. He ranked fifth in the WAC with three fumble recoveries.

Linebackers Brashton Satele and Blaze Soares also will see ample playing time in the front seven. Both hit hard and have a knack for finding the ballcarrier.

Satele had 53 tackles last season, playing next to Elimimian and Adam Leonard. Soares was hurt for most of the year, but he had a stellar 2007 campaign.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Hawaii lost both of its kickers, including All-WAC performer Dan Kelly. McMackin will replace the punter and placekicker in fall camp, and is a little nervous with the loss of long snapper Jake Ingram, who was drafted in the sixth round by the New England Patriots.

"He was one of the most valuable players on the team," McMackin said. "You don't know how important those guys are until they aren't around anymore."

Hawaii's top three returners are gone, leaving McMackin with more special teams decisions in August.

OVERVIEW

Hawaii will be hard pressed to remain in the upper tier of the WAC. The Warriors not only lost all nine defensive starters, but their top two kickers as well. Hawaii has Fresno State and Boise State at home, which should help. But the offense's improvement won't be able to completely counter the backpedaling on defense and special teams.

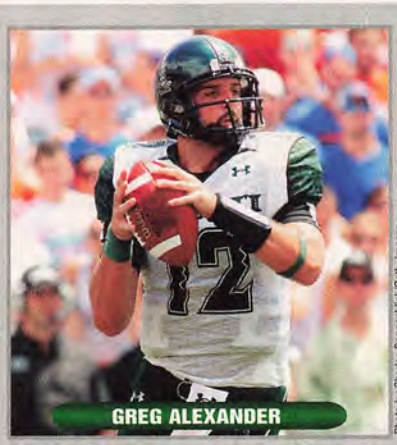

GREG ALEXANDER

Photo by Charles Sonnenblick/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Greg Alexander***	**6-3**	**230**	**Sr.**
	Brent Rausch	6-4	180	Jr.
RB	Leon Wright-Jackson	6-1	215	Sr.
	Inoke Funaki	5-11	190	Sr.
HB	Jon Medeiros	5-9	195	Sr.
	Ryan Henry	5-9	160	Jr.
WR	**Greg Salas***	**6-2**	**200**	**Jr.**
	Joe Avery	6-4	180	So.
WR	**Kealoha Pilares***	**5-11**	**190**	**Jr.**
	Dustin Blount	5-8	160	Jr.
WR	**Malcolm Lane***	**6-1**	**180**	**Sr.**
	Royce Pollard	6-0	175	So.
LT	**Aaron Kia***	**6-5**	**290**	**Sr.**
	Clayton Laurel	6-2	280	So.
LG	Ray Hisatake	6-3	315	Sr.
	Matagisila Lefiti	5-11	295	So.
C	**John Estes***	**6-2**	**295**	**Sr.**
	Matagisila Lefiti	5-11	295	So.
RG	Brysen Ginlack	6-2	310	Jr.
	Raphael Ieru	6-2	315	Sr.
RT	**Laupepa Letuli***	**6-4**	**320**	**Sr.**
	Adrian Thomas	6-6	305	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Elliott Purcell	6-3	250	Jr.
	Victor Clore	6-2	250	Sr.
LT	Tuika Tufaga	6-2	285	Sr.
	Rocky Savaiigaea	6-2	330	Sr.
RT	Vaughn Meatoga	6-2	305	So.
	David Hafoka	6-1	315	Jr.
RE	**John Fonoti***	**6-2**	**255**	**Sr.**
	Alasi Toilolo	6-3	255	So.
LB	Blaze Soares	6-1	235	Jr.
	Paipai Falemalu	6-3	225	Fr.
LB	**Brashton Satele***	**6-1**	**255**	**Sr.**
	Mana Lolotai	6-0	240	Jr.
LB	R.J. Kiesel-Kauhane	5-11	225	Jr.
	Po'okela Ahmad	6-1	225	Jr.
CB	Jeramy Bryant	5-10	170	Jr.
	Lewis Walker	5-11	160	Fr.
CB	Chris Black	5-10	175	Sr.
	Melvin Hopkins	5-9	165	Jr.
SS	Mana Silva	6-1	220	Jr.
	Kenny Estes	6-0	200	Jr.
FS	Spencer Smith	5-11	200	Jr.
	Lametrius Davis	6-0	190	Jr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Brett Symonds	5-10	145	Fr.
P	Spencer Smith	5-11	200	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 4	CENTRAL ARKANSAS
Sept. 12	vs. Washington State (Seattle)
Sept. 19	at UNLV
Sept. 30	at Louisiana Tech
Oct. 10	FRESNO STATE
Oct. 17	at Idaho
Oct. 24	BOISE STATE
Oct. 31	at Nevada
Nov. 7	UTAH STATE
Nov. 14	NEW MEXICO STATE
Nov. 21	at San Jose State
Nov. 28	NAVY
Dec. 5	WISCONSIN

2008 Results

(7-7, 5-3)

L	at Florida	10-56
W	WEBER STATE	36-17
L	at Oregon State	7-45
L	SAN JOSE STATE	17-20
W	at Fresno State (OT)	32-29
W	LOUISIANA TECH	24-14
L	at Boise State	7-27
W	NEVADA	38-31
L	at Utah State	14-30
W	at New Mexico State	42-30
W	IDAHO	49-17
W	WASHINGTON STATE	24-10
L	CINCINNATI	24-29
	Hawaii Bowl	
L	vs. Notre Dame	21-49

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.6	71
Rushing	94.5	111
Passing	251.3	28
Total	345.8	72
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	28.9	83
Rushing	142.1	65
Passing	218.8	78
Total	360.9	62
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 7	- 0.50	89

SAN JOSE STATE SPARTANS

NATIONAL RANK 96

WAC rank: 6 | Record: 6-6 | WAC record: 4-4 (T-5th) | Stadium: Spartan Stadium (31,218)

Spartans in A Box

COACH: Dick Tomey — At San Jose State: 23-25, 4 years; overall: 181-135-7, 28 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Steve Morton
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Keith Burns
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1991, Big West co-champions
LAST BOWL: 2006, New Mexico
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 7 offense, 7 defense, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: WR Kevin Jurovich, OL Ailao Eliapo, WR Terrance Williams, QB Kyle Reed, DB Duke Ihenacho, DE Carl Ihenacho
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The 53 returning lettermen are the most since Tomey took over in 2004. The experience will help the Spartans, particularly on defense. San Jose State has a good blend of defensive backs and front seven thoroughbreds. The Ihenacho brothers lead an aggressive unit.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Having to play a brutal schedule — opening with BCS bowl winners USC and Utah — to balance the books hurts a coach's winning percentage. The defense wore down last season because the offense was so ineffective. SJSU lost three defenders to the NFL Draft.

OFFENSE

One thing San Jose State should do is score more points than last season. The Spartans finished last in the WAC, averaging a paltry 18.7 points a game.

Coach Dick Tomey often has been on the conservative side offensively, but with the return of quarterback Kyle Reed and wideouts Terrance Williams and Kevin Jurovich, touchdowns won't be such a premium.

Jurovich, who missed most of last season with an illness, was a second-team All-WAC standout in 2007 after setting a single-season school record with 85 receptions for 1,183 yards, third-best all-time.

"You can see what he brings out there," Tomey said after the spring game. "It was something we were missing a year ago. He's elusive. He's fast. He's competitive."

Jurovich joins Williams, who finished third on the team a year ago with 22 catches. They give Reed the kind of targets needed to make big plays. Even without Jurovich, Reed had a solid '08 campaign, completing 64 percent of his passes for 1,563 yards and nine touchdowns.

But junior quarterback Jordan La Secla can't be counted out after an impressive spring.

More offensive punch could come from a pair of junior college transfers who arrived in the spring — receiver Marquis Avery and running back Lamon Muldrow, who was a workhorse at the JC level.

Tomey got other good news in the spring with the return of running back Patrick Perry, who missed the past two years with an injury.

All five starters return up front, including guard Ailao Eliapo, the only offensive lineman to start all 12 games.

DEFENSE

Brothers Carl and Duke Ihenacho lead an ever-improving defense. Before Tomey arrived in 2004, the Spartans were at the bottom of the national statistical rankings in nearly every pertinent category. No more.

Duke Ihenacho will move from linebacker to safety. The All-WAC first-teamer tied for the league lead in interceptions with five, returning two for touchdowns. He finished with 66 tackles and was second on the team in pass breakups with six. He will help coordinator Keith Burns replenish a depleted secondary.

Carl Ihenacho will again wreak havoc up front. The versatile senior end has 13 career sacks. He finished eighth nationally in tackles for loss last year with 18.5, including seven sacks.

Senior outside linebacker Justin Cole is a three-year starter, and senior Travis Jones returns in the middle after leading the team in tackles last season with 72.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Jurovich could see time in the return game, with sophomore Brandon Rutley leading the way on kickoffs. He returned 28 last year, averaging a healthy 26.7 yards a try.

Punter Philip Zavala is back, after averaging 36.6 yards on 76 kicks last year.

OVERVIEW

Two years ago, the Spartans went to a bowl game, pretty heady stuff for a what was a down-and-out program. Now, Tomey has to try to forge ahead once more after back-to-back .500 campaigns. The team has talent, but is it enough to compete with the likes of Boise State and nearby rivals Nevada and Fresno State?

KYLE REED

Photo by Dennis Hubbard

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Kyle Reed***	**6-3**	**215**	**Sr.**
	Jordan La Secla	6-3	198	Jr.
RB	Patrick Perry	5-10	205	Sr.
	Lamon Muldrow	5-9	210	Jr.
HB	Michael Avila	5-9	165	So.
	Brandon Rutley	5-10	190	So.
WR	Kevin Jurovich	6-0	183	Sr.
	Khalil Paden	6-1	165	So.
WR	Jalal Beauchman	6-4	220	Jr.
	Marquis Avery	6-4	205	Jr.
WR	**Terrance Williams***	**6-5**	**220**	**Sr.**
	Ryan Otten	6-5	215	Fr.
LT	**John Konye***	**6-4**	**290**	**Jr.**
	Fred Koloto	6-3	290	Jr.
LG	**Isaac Leatiota***	**6-4**	**295**	**Jr.**
	John Konye	6-4	270	Jr.
C	**Ronnie Castillo***	**6-0**	**292**	**Sr.**
	Robbie Reed	6-3	290	Jr.
RG	**Ailao Eliapo***	**6-2**	**320**	**Jr.**
	Steve Lightsy	6-4	370	Sr.
RT	**Jon Moreno***	**6-4**	**285**	**Sr.**
	Andres Vargas	6-4	280	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Mohamed Marah***	**6-0**	**245**	**Sr.**
	Joe Nigos	6-2	260	So.
DT	Kalvin Cressel	6-4	282	Sr.
	Pablo Garcia	6-2	290	So.
DT	**Adonis Davis***	**6-1**	**295**	**Sr.**
	Justin Willis	6-1	305	Jr.
DE	**Carl Ihenacho***	**6-3**	**256**	**Sr.**
	Liam Smith	6-5	250	Sr.
LB	**Travis Jones***	**6-1**	**230**	**Sr.**
	Ryno Gonzalez	6-1	230	Jr.
LB	**Justin Cole***	**6-3**	**240**	**Sr.**
	Pompey Festejo	6-0	200	Jr.
CB	Peyton Thompson	5-11	175	So.
	Austin Carter	5-10	170	Sr.
CB	Alex Germany	5-9	160	So.
	Ralph Johnson	5-10	175	So.
S	Tiuke Tuipulotu	5-10	195	So.
	Billy Ring	5-8	185	Sr.
S	**Duke Ihenacho***	**6-1**	**210**	**Jr.**
	Tanner Burns	6-1	185	So.
FS	**Devin Newsome***	**5-10**	**185**	**Jr.**
	Manu Ngatikaura	6-0	180	Jr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Tyler Cope	6-1	180	So.
P	**Philip Zavala***	**6-1**	**200**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	USC
Sept. 12	UTAH
Sept. 19	at Stanford
Sept. 26	CAL POLY
Oct. 10	IDAHO
Oct. 17	at Fresno State
Oct. 31	at Boise State
Nov. 8	NEVADA
Nov. 14	at Utah State
Nov. 21	HAWAII
Nov. 28	NEW MEXICO STATE
Dec. 5	at Louisiana Tech

2008 Results

(6-6, 4-4)

W	UC DAVIS	13-10
L	at Nebraska	12-35
W	SAN DIEGO STATE	35-10
L	at Stanford	10-23
W	at Hawaii	20-17
W	UTAH STATE	30-7
W	at New Mexico State	31-14
L	BOISE STATE	16-33
W	at Idaho	30-24
L	LOUISIANA TECH	0-21
L	at Nevada	17-41
L	FRESNO STATE	10-24

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	18.7	106
Rushing	86.7	115
Passing	196.2	79
Total	282.8	112
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	21.6	37
Rushing	141.4	63
Passing	170.3	10
Total	311.7	21
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 8	+ 0.67	21

NEW MEXICO STATE AGGIES

NATIONAL RANK 111

WAC rank: 7 | Record: 3-9 | WAC record: 1-7 (T-8th) | Stadium: Aggie Memorial Stadium (30,343)

Aggies in A Box

COACH: DeWayne Walker — At New Mexico State and overall: 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Timm Rosenbach
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: DeWayne Walker
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1960, Border Conference
LAST BOWL: 1960, Sun
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 5 offense, 6 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: WR Marcus Anderson, RB Tonny Glynn, RB Marquell Colston, OL Chuck Taylor, LB Nick Paden, CB Davon House, LB Jamar Cotton, K/P Kyle Hughes
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Scrapping the gimmicky offense and defense of a year ago is a nice start. Walker, who was the respected defensive coordinator at UCLA, won't allow his reputation to be tarnished, so the NMSU defense likely will be the team's strength, led by an experienced linebacking corps.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: There isn't much proven talent, and the lack of production at quarterback in the spring was most troubling. If the light doesn't come on for someone in fall camp, the offense likely will struggle all season. The road schedule is particularly challenging.

OFFENSE

Fans are excited about new coach DeWayne Walker, but there is no denying the offense won't produce the same numbers in 2009 — or possibly ever again — as it did under former coach Hal Mumme.

His passing spread offense is gone, as are three of the school's all-time offensive leaders — quarterback Chase Holbrook and record-setting receivers Chris Williams and A.J. Harris.

The hope is a safer, more traditional offense will help the program add wins, not just pad passing stats. The new coordinator is Timm Rosenbach, the former NFL quarterback who is one of college football's best-kept secrets, according to Walker.

After spring ball, NMSU's best-kept secret is what they'll do at quarterback. Redshirt freshman Trevor Walls and junior college transfer Jeff Fleming capped off equally unimpressive springs after matching 4-for-16 passing performances in the spring game.

Carrying the increased load at running back will be some combination of seniors Tonny Glynn and Marquell Colston, and junior Seth Smith. Glynn and Colston were NMSU's top two rushers in 2008.

Undersized speedsters Marcus Anderson, Julius Fleming and Todd Lee — each under 5-9, 167 pounds — will join bigger junior college transfers Marcus Allen and William Bullock at wide receiver. Tight end Kyle Nelson had a very good spring.

The line has several players coming off injury-plagued seasons, with guard Chuck Taylor, center Mike Grady and tackle Patrick Blount having started more than half the games in 2008.

DEFENSE

The pass defense led the WAC and ranked third in the nation, allowing 159.42 passing yards per game in 2008. It's difficult to tell if that was because of quality secondary play or because the rushing defense ranked 115th in the country.

The defense will transition from a 3-3-5 look to Walker's traditional 4-3 scheme.

Linebacker Nick Paden, who was third in the WAC with 8.9 tackles per game, will be an anchor for Walker's defense. Weakside linebacker Jason Scott, who had nine tackles for loss last year, is the team's second-leading returning tackler.

Cornerback Davon House has a knack for turnovers, picking off a pair of passes and recovering two fumbles a year ago. Four safeties — Alphonso Powell, Junior Fasavalu, Stephon Hatchett and Michael Zant — should get significant minutes.

The line isn't very experienced, which might not be a bad thing as last year's unit struggled against the run and couldn't generate much of a pass rush.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker/punter Kyle Hughes returns, but Walker's defense-first approach means Hughes' value at punter could strip him of his placekicking duties. If that happens, fellow sophomore Jordan Davenport likely will assume kicking duties.

NMSU loses its top punt and kick returners, but Marcus Anderson could fill both roles and become one of the WAC's better return men.

OVERVIEW

The excitement of having one of the nation's top passing attacks the past four years under Mumme quickly wore off when it became apparent those gaudy numbers came at the expense of a run game and defense.

Walker's inherited roster left him void of much talent, and he will have to transition from playing a gimmicky pass-happy offense and an unconventional 3-3-5 defense.

The two most winnable games come in the first two weeks at home against Idaho and Prairie View A&M. After that, 2009 could be another long season.

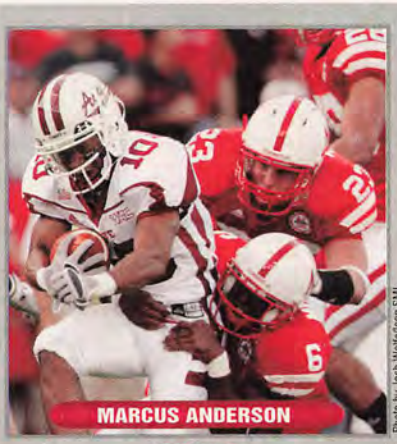

MARCUS ANDERSON

Photo by Josh Wolfe/Icon SMI

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Jeff Fleming	6-4	195	Jr.
	Trevor Walls	6-5	220	Fr.
RB	Tonny Glynn	5-8	192	Sr.
	Marquell Colston	5-9	205	Sr.
FB	**Brandon Perez***	**5-8**	**236**	**Sr.**
	Ron Opetaia	5-9	221	So.
WR	**Marcus Anderson***	**5-8**	**166**	**Sr.**
	William Bullock	6-3	205	Jr.
WR	Julius Fleming	5-8	162	So.
	Marcus Allen	6-0	190	Jr.
TE	Kyle Nelson	6-4	232	Jr.
	Ronny Torres	6-4	255	Jr.
LT	David Norman	6-4	300	Sr.
	Kyle Smith	6-6	312	Jr.
LG	**Chuck Taylor***	**6-3**	**345**	**Jr.**
	Sioeli Fakalata	6-3	313	Sr.
C	**Mike Grady***	**6-3**	**302**	**So.**
	JR Saulietis	6-3	310	Sr.
RG	Joe Palmer	6-3	308	Sr.
	Mike Yocius	6-4	295	Fr.
RT	**Patrick Blount***	**6-3**	**275**	**Jr.**
	Joe Suder	6-5	346	Sr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Pierre Fils	6-3	230	So.
	Justen Alford	6-2	227	Sr.
NT	E.J. Cannon	6-0	292	Sr.
	John Finau	6-1	295	Jr.
DT	Donte Savage	6-1	229	So.
	Ka'ua Adolpho	6-1	233	Jr.
DE	Kawika Shook	6-3	248	Jr.
	Vincent Federico	6-4	290	Jr.
LB	**Jason Scott***	**5-10**	**207**	**Sr.**
	Dawan Nolton	5-11	212	Fr.
LB	**Nick Paden***	**6-3**	**235**	**Sr.**
	Ross Conner	5-10	212	Sr.
LB	**Jamar Cotton***	**6-0**	**218**	**Sr.**
	Sam King	60	223	Sr.
CB	**Davon House***	**6-0**	**172**	**Jr.**
	Ben Bradley	5-10	183	So.
CB	Chris Buckner	6-0	188	Sr.
	Jonte Green	6-0	175	So.
SS	**Alphonso Powell***	**5-9**	**182**	**Jr.**
	Junior Fasavalu	6-0	191	Sr.
FS	Stephon Hatchett	5-8	170	Jr.
	Michael Zant*	**5-10**	**171**	**So.**

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Jordan Davenport	6-1	190	So.
P	**Kyle Hughes***	**6-0**	**184**	**So.**

*** Returning Starters in Bold**

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	IDAHO
Sept. 12	PRAIRIE VIEW A&M
Sept. 19	UTEP
Sept. 26	at New Mexico
Oct. 3	at San Diego State
Oct. 10	UTAH STATE
Oct. 17	at Louisiana Tech
Oct. 24	FRESNO STATE
Oct. 31	at Ohio State
Nov. 14	at Hawaii
Nov. 21	NEVADA
Nov. 28	at San Jose State
Dec. 5	at Boise State

2008 Results

(3-9, 1-7)

L	at Nebraska	7-38
W	at UTEP	34-33
L	NEW MEXICO	24-35
W	ALCORN STATE	45-10
W	at Nevada	48-45
L	SAN JOSE STATE	14-31
L	at Idaho	14-20
L	BOISE STATE	0-49
L	HAWAII	30-42
L	at Fresno State	17-24
L	LOUISIANA TECH	31-35
L	at Utah State	2-47

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	22.2	89
Rushing	54.3	118
Passing	301.3	10
Total	355.6	64
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	34.1	105
Rushing	220.2	115
Passing	159.4	3
Total	379.6	75
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 6	- 0.50	89

IDAHO VANDALS

NATIONAL RANK 117

WAC rank: 8 | Record: 2-10 | WAC Record 1-7 (T-8th) | Stadium: Kibble Dome (16,000)

Vandals in A Box

COACH: Robb Akey — At Idaho and overall: 3-21, 2 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Steve Axman
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mark Criner
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1998, Big West
LAST BOWL: 1998, Humanitarian
RETURNING STARTERS: 11; 5 offense, 6 defense
PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Deonte Jackson, RB Princeton McCarty, OL Mike Iupati, QB Nathan Enderle, S Shiloh Keo, LB JoJo Dickson, WR Max Komar, OL Matt Cleveland
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: At the very least, Idaho will have depth at running back. At the very most, they can receive the kind of production they've been waiting for from the aforementioned backfield. Deonte Jackson and Princeton McCarty provide UI with a solid one-two punch, but consistency will be key if UI is going to find success on the ground.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: A defense that was ranked 116th in the nation, a new kicker and punter — there is never a shortage of problems for a team that has won just 18 games since 2001. The Vandals have many question marks on both sides of the ball and are once again heavy underdogs in the WAC.

OFFENSE

Quarterback Nathan Enderle again fought for his job this spring, beating out junior college transfer and one-time Arkansas Razorback Brian Reader. The competition was stiff, and Enderle will have to perform well to maintain his starting gig.

Enderle had another up-and-down season under center, but showed signs of improvement from his injury- and interception-plagued freshman campaign. He threw more touchdowns than interceptions (20-17), a huge improvement over the 10 touchdowns and 18 picks he threw in 2007.

His 2,077 passing yards and 20 touchdowns ranked fifth and fourth in the conference, respectively.

Idaho hopes the running game can remove some of the pressure.

Junior Deonte Jackson burst onto the scene as a freshman with an average of 97.9 yards per game — the second-best total in the WAC. Last year, however, didn't yield the same success.

Jackson tallied almost 500 fewer yards, primarily because he shared much of the rushing responsibilities with Princeton McCarty, and all indications are that Idaho will follow the same formula this season.

McCarty proved his worth in 2008, with his biggest contribution coming in a career-best 161-yard showing in a win over New Mexico State. Sophomores Troy Vital and Kama Bailey also are in the mix.

Most of UI's receivers are back, but there is one big hole to fill. Tight end Eddie Williams, a seventh-round draft pick of the Washington Redskins, caught twice as many passes, twice as many touchdowns and nearly 400 more yards than the team's second-leading receiver.

The Vandals will turn to receivers Max Komar, Eric Greenwood and sophomore Preston Davis, who impressed during a solid freshman campaign.

DEFENSE

Idaho's defense was arguably the worst in the program's history. The Vandals surrendered a school-record 513 points and ranked 117th in the nation in scoring defense. In the defense's defense, UI battled a combination of youth and devastating injuries all season.

The most costly injury came in the fourth game when safety Shiloh Keo was lost for the year with a shoulder injury. He had already racked up 31 tackles and a blocked punt on the season.

Keo is back and will lead an experienced secondary that includes fellow safety Jeromy Jones, as well as returning starter Isaac Butts at corner. Kenny Patten won the other starting corner spot after a productive 2008 in which he played in all 12 games.

UI's defensive front is experienced. Junior Aaron Lavarias moves to end, with Michael Cosgrove and Jonah Sataraka occupying the tackle positions. The pair combined to play in all but one game last season.

JoJo Dickson is the most experienced backer in an inexperienced group, but he missed three games last year and had trouble staying healthy this spring. Look for sophomores Tre'Shawn Robinson and Robert Siavii at the other linebacker spots.

SPECIAL TEAMS

UI has to replace its kicker and punter. Tino Amancio and T.J. Conley are both gone after wonderful stints in Moscow. Next in line are redshirt freshmen Bobby Cowan (punter) and Trey Farquhar (kicker).

OVERVIEW

The Vandals open against three opponents that went a combined 5-31 in 2008. Some early wins might just save the Vandals from another forgettable year. Of course, those three opponents are probably thinking the same when they see Idaho on their schedule.

DEONTE JACKSON

Photo by Lisa Blumenfeld/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Nathan Enderle***	**6-5**	**223**	**Jr.**
	Brian Reader	6-3	220	So.
RB	**Deonte Jackson***	**5-8**	**191**	**Jr.**
	Princeton McCarty	5-8	174	So.
HB	Daniel Hardy	6-2	211	Jr.
	Patrick Mealey	6-2	234	Fr.
WR	**Preston Davis***	**6-1**	**191**	**So.**
	Dewey Hale	5-10	194	Jr.
WR	Max Komar	5-10	202	Sr.
	Quin Ashley	5-11	199	Jr.
TE	Peter Bjorvik	6-4	245	Sr.
	Kevin Small	6-3	257	Sr.
LT	Matt Cleveland	6-4	310	So.
	Ron Mallory	6-7	285	Fr.
LG	**Mike Iupati***	**6-6**	**330**	**Sr.**
	Kurt Newboles	6-7	298	Jr.
C	Irv Stevens III	6-3	274	Sr.
	Guy Reynolds	6-3	331	Fr.
RG	Adam Juratovac	6-3	299	Sr.
	Tevita Halaholo	6-5	358	Jr.
RT	**Bryce Sinclair***	**6-5**	**327**	**Sr.**
	Tyrone Novikoff	6-7	308	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Aaron Lavarias***	**6-3**	**262**	**Jr.**
	Charles Smith	6-5	256	So.
DT	Michael Cosgrove	6-4	265	So.
	Fono Sekona	6-2	283	Jr.
DT	Jonah Sataraka	6-2	285	Jr.
	Oga Faumui*	**6-0**	**299**	**Sr.**
DE	Hank Bryant	6-3	222	So.
	Andre Ferguson	6-3	225	So.
LB	JoJo Dickson	6-1	215	Jr.
	Brad Marboe	6-3	190	Fr.
LB	Tre'Shawn Robinson	5-11	243	So.
	Paul Senescall	6-1	225	Jr.
LB	Robert Siavii	6-2	195	So.
	Korey Toomer	6-2	225	Jr.
CB	**Isaac Butts***	**6-0**	**175**	**Jr.**
	Eric Hunter	5-6	154	Jr.
CB	Kenny Patten	5-9	183	So.
	Andre Robinson	6-0	190	Fr.
SS	**Shiloh Keo***	**5-10**	**214**	**Jr.**
	Virdell Larkins*	**6-0**	**191**	**Sr.**
FS	**Jeromy Jones***	**6-0**	**200**	**Sr.**
	Shelton Miles	5-9	175	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Trey Farquhar	6-1	175	Fr.
P	Bobby Cowan	6-4	212	Fr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	at New Mexico State
Sept. 12	at Washington
Sept. 19	SAN DIEGO STATE
Sept. 26	at Northern Illinois
Oct. 3	COLORADO STATE
Oct. 10	at San Jose State
Oct. 17	HAWAII
Oct. 24	at Nevada
Oct. 31	LOUISIANA TECH
Nov. 7	FRESNO STATE
Nov. 14	at Boise State
Nov. 28	UTAH STATE

2008 Results

(2-10, 1-7)

L	at Arizona	0-70
W	IDAHO STATE	42-27
L	WESTERN MICHIGAN	28-51
L	at Utah State	17-42
L	at San Diego State	17-45
L	NEVADA	14-49
L	at Fresno State	32-45
L	at Louisiana Tech	14-46
W	NEW MEXICO STATE	20-14
L	SAN JOSE STATE	24-30
L	BOISE STATE	10-45
L	at Hawaii	17-49

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	19.6	103
Rushing	133.2	74
Passing	187.8	86
Total	320.9	93
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	42.8	117
Rushing	209.6	107
Passing	262.4	107
Total	472.0	116
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 14	- 1.17	114

UTAH STATE AGGIES

NATIONAL RANK 118

WAC rank: 9 | Record: 3-9 | WAC record: 3-5 (7th) | Stadium: Romney Stadium (30,257)

Aggies in A Box

COACH: Gary Andersen — At Utah State: first season; overall: 4-7, 1 year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dave Baldwin
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bill Busch
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1997, Big West co-champs
LAST BOWL: 1997, Humanitarian
RETURNING STARTERS: 19; 10 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Diondre Borel, RB Robert Turbin, WR Omar Sawyer, C Brennan McFadden, LB Paul Igboeli, SS James Brindley
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Aggies should have new life with a new coach, former Utah defensive coordinator Gary Andersen. They have a lot of experience and a dangerous dual-threat quarterback in Diondre Borel.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Aggies have been woeful since joining the WAC in 2005. There's no reason to think they have the talent to contend for a bowl berth this year. The defense allowed 34.7 points per game last season, leaving Andersen with his work cut out for him.

OFFENSE

The Aggies spent spring ball installing a new spread offense under the direction of coordinator Dave Baldwin, who was the coordinator at New Mexico the past two seasons. The offense will put quarterback Diondre Borel in the shotgun and operate without a huddle.

The spread should suit Borel well. The diminutive quarterback (6-0, 174 pounds) baffled many WAC teams last season with his elusiveness. He started the final nine games, passing for 1,705 yards and rushing for 632 — making him one of seven players nationwide to lead his team in both categories.

His challenge from coaches: Sit in the pocket more and improve on his 56.2 percent passing.

Nine other starters return. Tailback Robert Turbin averaged 4.6 yards per carry last season, but got the ball fewer than 10 times per game.

The receiving corps appears deep. None of those players, however, is a proven go-to guy. Omar Sawyer provided some hope with 196 receiving yards and two long touchdowns in the spring game.

Other returning wideouts include Stanley Morrison (26 catches last year), Nnamdi Gwacham (20) and Xavier Bowman (nine). Sophomore Austin Alder (two) is pushing to crack the starting lineup following a productive spring.

The line returns four starters. Center Brennan McFadden was named to the All-WAC second-team last season, when he played right guard and center. Guards Funaki Asisi and Philip Gapelu, and tackle Spencer Johnson, also return, along with four backups who earned letters.

DEFENSE

The new coaching staff implemented a pressure-based defense that mostly will use man coverage.

To make that defense work, the coaches have made speed their No. 1 priority. That quest led them to move 14 players from offense or other defensive positions to new spots on defense. For the most part, those changes moved players closer to the ball — from linebacker to end, or end to tackle, for example.

Senior linebacker Paul Igboeli, second-team All-WAC last year, is the top returner. Igboeli has racked up 242 career tackles and should finish in the top 10 in WAC and Utah State history.

He's more than a tackler, though — last year he had four pass breakups, two fumble recoveries, an interception and a blocked field goal. Sophomore linebacker Bobby Wagner (51 tackles) also returns.

The secondary has a couple of playmakers in safety James Brindley and cornerback Kejon Murphy. Linemen Alan Bishop, Darby Golden and Nathan Royster provide experience across the front.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Junior Peter Caldwell returns as the kicker and punter. He was 10 of 12 on field goals last season, missing just twice from inside 50 yards. He also averaged 41.9 yards per punt with good hang time to prevent long returns. Chris Ulinski, the backup, handles long field goals, making a 56-yarder last year.

Kejon Murphy is the Aggies' top return man. He was dangerous on kickoffs with a 24.2-yard average and solid on punt returns with an 8.8-yard average — but this is an area where Utah State could make inroads in a league that has some suspect special-teams units.

The Aggies have one of those themselves — allowing 28.1 yards per kickoff return.

OVERVIEW

The Aggies made some progress last season and should be better this year, but they play eight bowl teams and have road dates against Utah, Texas A&M, BYU, Fresno State and Hawaii. Significantly improving the record won't be easy.

2009 Schedule

Sept. 3	at Utah
Sept. 19	at Texas A&M
Sept. 26	SOUTHERN UTAH
Oct. 2	at BYU
Oct. 10	at New Mexico State
Oct. 17	NEVADA
Oct. 24	LOUISIANA TECH
Oct. 31	at Fresno State
Nov. 7	at Hawaii
Nov. 14	SAN JOSE STATE
Nov. 20	BOISE STATE
Nov. 28	at Idaho

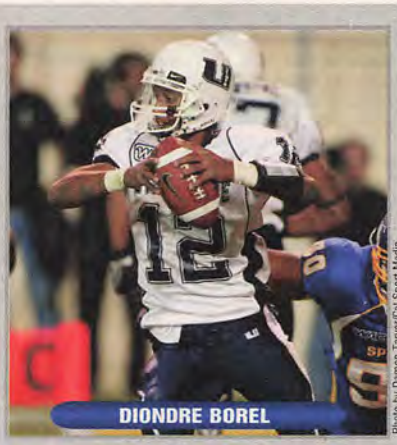
2008 Results

(3-9, 3-5)

L	at UNLV	17-27
L	at Oregon	24-66
L	UTAH	10-58
W	IDAHO	42-17
L	BYU	14-34
L	at San Jose State	7-30
L	at Nevada	17-44
L	FRESNO STATE	28-30
W	HAWAII	30-14
L	at Boise State	14-49
L	at Louisiana Tech	38-45
W	NEW MEXICO STATE	47-2

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.0	78
Rushing	137.8	68
Passing	196.5	78
Total	334.3	84
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	34.7	107
Rushing	161.6	82
Passing	251.1	98
Total	412.7	99
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 1	- 0.08	67



DIONDRE BOREL

Photo by Damon Tarver/Cal Sport Media

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Diondre Borel***	**6-0**	**174**	**Jr.**
	Adam Eastman	6-1	198	Fr.
RB	**Robert Turbin***	**5-10**	**202**	**So.**
	Marquis Butler	6-0	192	So.
WR	Xavier Bowman	6-3	195	Sr.
	Emmanual Ojeriakhi	6-2	205	Fr.
WR	Austin Alder	5-11	178	So.
	Nnamdi Gwacham*	**6-3**	**205**	**Sr.**
WR	**Stanley Morrison***	**5-9**	**151**	**So.**
	Omar Sawyer*	**5-9**	**174**	**Sr.**
TE	Zac Zimmerman	6-6	252	Sr.
	Jeremy Mitchell*	**6-5**	**243**	**Sr.**
LT	**Spencer Johnson***	**6-5**	**285**	**Jr.**
	John Darrah	6-4	263	Sr.
LG	**Funaki Asisi***	**6-3**	**295**	**So.**
	Ty Rogers	6-4	279	Jr.
C	**Brennan McFadden***	**6-2**	**305**	**Jr.**
	David Disman	6-1	263	So.
RG	**Philip Gapelu***	**6-2**	**306**	**So.**
	Carlos Cuevas	6-3	311	So.
RT	Tariq Polley	6-4	315	Jr.
	Taner Richins	6-6	308	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Antonio May	6-4	231	Sr.
	Darby Golden*	**6-2**	**254**	**Sr.**
NT	Magnum Mauga	5-11	306	Sr.
	Alan Bishop*	**6-5**	**281**	**Sr.**
DT	**Nathan Royster***	**6-0**	**252**	**Jr.**
	Casey Davis	6-3	281	Sr.
DE	Quinn Garner	6-3	236	So.
	Robert Tidwell	6-4	250	Fr.
LB	**Bobby Wagner***	**6-1**	**217**	**So.**
	Jake Poulson	6-1	214	So.
LB	Jacob Atkinson	6-1	208	So.
	Reuben Willis	5-10	239	So.
LB	**Paul Igboeli***	**6-0**	**201**	**Sr.**
	Kyle Gallagher	6-1	203	So.
CB	**Kejon Murphy***	**5-9**	**155**	**Sr.**
	Sidney Allen	6-1	180	Jr.
CB	Chris Randle	5-10	176	Jr.
	Curtis Marsh	6-1	184	Jr.
SS	Maxim Dinka	5-11	211	Jr.
	Walter McClenton	5-11	176	So.
FS	**James Brindley***	**5-11**	**189**	**Sr.**
	Chris Williams	6-2	189	Sr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Peter Caldwell***	**6-4**	**236**	**Jr.**
P	**Peter Caldwell***	**6-4**	**236**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

BOWL SCHEDULE

The NCAA certified the same 34 bowl games as last season, although there were a few changes in affiliations. The postseason stretches almost three weeks, with games on 17 different days.

BCS NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Jan. 7, 8 p.m., FOX · Pasadena, Calif.
BCS #1 vs. BCS #2

ORANGE
Jan. 5, 8 p.m., FOX
Miami
BCS (ACC)
vs. BCS at-large

FIESTA
Jan. 4, 8 p.m., FOX
Glendale, Ariz.
BCS (Big 12)
vs. BCS at-large

SUGAR
Jan. 1, 8:30 p.m., FOX
New Orleans
BCS (SEC)
vs. BCS at-large

ROSE
Jan. 1, 5 p.m., ABC
Pasadena, Calif.
BCS (Big Ten)
vs. BCS (Pac-10)

NEW MEXICO
Dec. 19, 2:30 p.m., ESPN
Albuquerque, N.M.
MWC vs. WAC

ST. PETERSBURG
Dec. 19, 8 p.m., ESPN
St. Petersburg, Fla.
Big East vs. C-USA

NEW ORLEANS
Dec. 20, 8 p.m., ESPN
New Orleans
C-USA vs. Sun Belt

LAS VEGAS
Dec. 22, 8 p.m., ESPN
Las Vegas
MWC vs. Pac-10

POINSETTIA
Dec. 23, 8 p.m., ESPN
San Diego
MWC vs. Pac-10

HAWAII
Dec. 24, 8 p.m., ESPN
Honolulu
C-USA vs. WAC

MEINEKE CAR CARE
Dec. 26, 4 p.m., ESPN
Charlotte, N.C.
ACC vs. Big East

MOTOR CITY
Dec. 26, 5 p.m., ESPN
Detroit
Big Ten vs. MAC

EMERALD
Dec. 26, 8:30 p.m., ESPN
San Francisco
ACC vs. Pac-10

MUSIC CITY
Dec. 27, 8:15 p.m., ESPN
Nashville, Tenn.
ACC vs. SEC

INDEPENDENCE
Dec. 28, 5 p.m., ESPN
Shreveport, La.
Big 12 vs. SEC

CHAMPS SPORTS
Dec. 29, 8 p.m., ESPN
Orlando, Fla.
ACC vs. Big Ten

EAGLEBANK
Dec. 30, 4:30 p.m., ESPN
Washington, D.C.
ACC vs. U.S. military academy

HUMANITARIAN
Dec. 30, 4:30 p.m., ESPN
Boise, Idaho
MWC vs. WAC

HOLIDAY
Dec. 30, 8 p.m., ESPN
San Diego
Big 12 vs. Pac-10

TEXAS
Dec. 30, 8 p.m., NFL Network
Houston
Big 12 vs. Navy

ARMED FORCES
Dec. 31, TBD, ESPN
Fort Worth, Texas
C-USA vs. MWC

SUN
Dec. 31, noon, CBS
El Paso, Texas
Pac-10 vs. Big East/Big 12/ND

INSIGHT
Dec. 31, 5:30 p.m., NFL Network
Tempe, Ariz.
Big Ten vs. Big 12

CHICK-FIL-A
Dec. 31, 7:30 p.m., ESPN
Atlanta
ACC vs. SEC

OUTBACK
Jan. 1, 11 a.m., ESPN
Tampa, Fla.
Big Ten vs. SEC

CAPITAL ONE
Jan. 1, 1 p.m., ABC
Orlando, Fla.
Big Ten vs. SEC

GATOR
Jan. 1, 1 p.m., CBS
Jacksonville, Fla.
ACC vs. Big East/Big 12/ND

INTERNATIONAL
Jan. 2, noon, ESPN2
Toronto, Canada
Big East vs. MAC

COTTON
Jan. 2, 2 p.m., FOX
Arlington, Texas
Big 12 vs. SEC

PAPAJOHNS.COM
Jan. 2, 2 p.m., ESPN
Birmingham, Ala.
Big East vs. SEC

LIBERTY
Jan. 2, 5:30 p.m., ESPN
Memphis, Tenn.
C-USA vs. SEC

ALAMO
Jan. 2, 9 p.m., ESPN
San Antonio
Big Ten vs. Big 12

GMAC
Jan. 6, 7 p.m., ESPN
Mobile, Ala.
ACC vs. MAC

*All times ET

Chips in Central Michigan's Favor Once More

Ball State went from Mid-American Conference heavyweight to lightweight contender in a matter of months.

Coach Brady Hoke was gone before the 2008 season ended, and junior quarterback Nate Davis followed him out of town when he declared for the NFL Draft.

The new bully on the block isn't really new — Central Michigan is 13-3 against the MAC in two seasons under coach Butch Jones. Jones returns the league's superstar, fourth-year starting quarterback Dan LeFevour.

He averages 300 yards from scrimmage a game and is in position to finish in the top three all-time in yards. The Chippewas' offense takes the spotlight, but the defense should be one of the MAC's best in 2009.

With Ball State falling back to the pack, Western Michigan appears to be the greatest threat to CMU. Western's Tim Hiller threw 36 touchdown passes last season — 10 more than any other MAC passer — but he'd like to show that his performances in his last two games (Ball State, Rice) were an aberration.

The Broncos lost at Central Michigan (38-28) in 2008, but host the pivotal tug of war in the West this time.

Kent State hasn't named an official replacement for quarterback Julian Edelman. Until the Golden Flashes get that position worked out, they'll lean even more heavily on 5-5 dynamo Eugene Jarvis.

Northern Illinois slipped into the bowl picture with a .500 regular-season record and lurks as a West dark horse. One reason to like the Huskies: strong line play on both sides of the ball.

With a veteran starting quarterback in Tyler Sheehan and a keen offensive mind, first-year Bowling Green coach Dave Clawson might have been the right man at the right time for the Falcons.

The news at Ohio in spring was the loosening of the run-heavy noose on offense. How much sense that makes given Chris Garrett's strong finish — 222 yards vs. Miami (Ohio) in the '08 finale — and ongoing questions about which senior should start at quarterback is open to debate.

Ball State has MiQuale Lewis at halfback and their offensive scheme remains the same under coach Stan Parrish, who graduated from the coordinator's job when Hoke left for San Diego State.

There's progress being made at Temple. Coach Al Golden earned more plaudits for his recruiting class and the Owls have enough talent to be in the top half of the conference if they can win the close ones and compete on the road.

Andy Schmitt led Eastern Michigan's upset of Central Michigan last Nov. 28 (56-52), a game in which his line was a ridiculous 58 of 80 for 516 yards and five TDs. A week earlier, he threw the ball 76 times against Temple. He'd get more attention if the Eagles could evolve from a perpetual rebuilding mode.

Michael Haywood (Miami) has the veteran coaching staff to rebuild the RedHawks, but that'll take time.

It could be an easier transition for Tim Beckman (Toledo), the former defensive coordinator at Oklahoma State. If the Rockets keep Aaron Opelt upright and Beckman pushes the right buttons on the defensive line, going from three wins to seven isn't implausible.

— Jeff Reynolds

MAC Picks

		GOOD NEWS	BAD NEWS	OUR CALL
EAST	1. Buffalo	RB depth; top receiver Naaman Roosevelt; developing defense.	Expectations might exceed this team's realistic ceiling.	Finding a quarterback — and offensive balance — a must.
EAST	2. Bowling Green	QB Tyler Sheehan can keep the Falcons near the top of the heap.	The Falcons don't have defensive stars of yesteryear.	If the defense grows up in a month's time, BGSU is the East favorite.
EAST	3. Akron	Zips have a loaded backfield and receiver corps.	Many defensive mainstays — and leading tacklers — are gone.	Akron could be up-and-down, but loaded offense too much to deny.
EAST	4. Kent State	There's enough from the running game to prop up first-year starter at QB.	The Flashes still have holes at wide receiver and a skittish kicking game.	If Giorgio Morgan shows more than just a strong arm, a bowl spot.
EAST	5. Temple	No team can endure the bad breaks Owls had last year; 17 starters are back.	You make your own luck. QB battle lasts into the fall.	Knocking on the door, but not there yet.
EAST	6. Ohio	Theo Scott/Boo Jackson timeshare remains a possibility.	Can the Bobcats forge a new identity? Chris Garrett unproven as "the guy."	A softer schedule isn't enough to get them back to six wins.
EAST	7. Miami	The coaching roster is impressive, should spark player growth.	It's a rebuilding season.	Light on leadership = short on wins.
WEST	1. C. Michigan	Dan LeFevour. The better news might be high expectations on defense.	Without a proven running game, LeFevour has to do it all.	Chippewas fell back to the pack in 2008, return to dominance in '09.
WEST	2. W. Michigan	Been there (bowl game); hosts Central Michigan; QB Tim Hiller.	Hiller flopped late in '08 and the Broncos lost key leaders.	WMU has busted through, but they won't get over the CMU hump.
WEST	3. Ball State	MiQuale Lewis is big and bad. When he's healthy, he's a ton.	Cardinals have to develop new leadership — and a No. 1 quarterback.	The offense will score, but can't expect to keep the pace it set in '08.
WEST	4. N. Illinois	Experience is plentiful; the special teams and line play are assets.	This might be the wrong MAC division in which to play underdog.	Coach Jerry Kill's history indicates Huskies could surprise — this year or next?
WEST	5. Toledo	QB Aaron Opelt is efficient, and RB Morgan Williams has big-play ability.	The front seven is being rebuilt.	Rockets can soar into the title picture with a strong October.
WEST	6. E. Michigan	The Eagles can score with almost any team in the MAC.	The Eagles cannot stop anyone on defense.	Shootouts are the norm in this league, but the defense can't be a turnstile.

Lindy's 2009 ALL-MAC Team

OFFENSE - First Team

QB	Dan LeFevour	Sr.	Central Michigan
RB	MiQuale Lewis	Sr.	Ball State
RB	James Starks	Sr.	Buffalo
WR	Naaman Roosevelt	Sr.	Buffalo
WR	Antonio Brown	Jr.	Central Michigan
TE	Madaris Grant	Sr.	Ball State
C	Eddie Adamski	Sr.	Northern Illinois
OL	Phillip Swanson	Jr.	Western Michigan
OL	Jason Onyebuagu	Sr.	Northern Illinois
OL	Brady Minturn	Sr.	Bowling Green
OL	Michael Switzer	Jr.	Ball State
AP	Antonio Brown	Jr.	Central Michigan
PK	Mike Salerno	Sr.	Northern Illinois

DEFENSE - First Team

DL	Frank Zombo	Sr.	Central Michigan
DL	Brandon Crawford	Sr.	Ball State
DL	Almondo Sewell	Jr.	Akron
DL	Andre Neblett	Sr.	Temple
LB	Nick Bellore	Jr.	Central Michigan
LB	Austin Pritchard	Sr.	Western Michigan
LB	Noah Keller	Jr.	Ohio
DB	Barry Church	Sr.	Toledo
DB	Sean Baker	So.	Ball State
DB	Davonte Shannon	Jr.	Buffalo
DB	Brian Lainhart	Jr.	Kent State
P	Ben Armer	So.	Western Michigan

OFFENSE - Second Team

QB	Tim Hiller	Sr.	Western Michigan
RB	Eugene Jarvis	Sr.	Kent State
RB	Brandon West	Jr.	Western Michigan
WR	Bryan Anderson	Sr.	Central Michigan
WR	Freddie Barnes	Sr.	Bowling Green
TE	Jimmy Scheidler	Sr.	Bowling Green
C	Ben Bojicic	So.	Bowling Green
OL	Mark Zielinski	Fr.	Western Michigan
OL	Shane Steffy	Sr.	Bowling Green
OL	Jared DeWalt	Sr.	Toledo
OL	Corey Woods	Jr.	Akron
AP	Dustin Woods	Sr.	Miami
PK	Andrew Aguila	Sr.	Central Michigan

DEFENSE - Second Team

DL	Brandon Bice	Sr.	Northern Illinois
DL	Sean Murnane	Jr.	Central Michigan
DL	Junior Galette	Sr.	Temple
DL	Sam Williams	Sr.	Central Michigan
LB	Justin Winters	Jr.	Buffalo
LB	Archie Donald	Jr.	Toledo
LB	Alex Joseph	Sr.	Temple
DB	P.J. Mahone	Sr.	Bowling Green
DB	Josh Gordy	Sr.	Central Michigan
DB	Mike Newton	Sr.	Buffalo
DB	Steven Jackson	Sr.	Ohio
P	Nick Iovinelli	Sr.	Bowling Green

THE BIG ONES

Sept. 5	Central Michigan at Arizona Northern Illinois at Wisconsin Western Michigan at Michigan
Sept. 12	Central Michigan at Michigan State Pitt at Buffalo
Sep. 26	Boise State at Bowling Green
Oct. 3	Central Michigan at Buffalo
Oct. 10	Western Michigan at Toledo
Oct. 17	Central Michigan at Western Michigan
Oct. 24	Central Michigan at Bowling Green Buffalo at Western Michigan
Oct. 31	Central Michigan at Boston College Western Michigan at Kent State
Nov. 3	Bowling Green at Buffalo
Nov. 18	Central Michigan at Ball State
Nov. 27	Northern Illinois at Central Michigan

Bowl Connections

MAC #1/2
GMAC Bowl vs. C-USA

MAC #1/2
Motor City Bowl vs. Big Ten

MAC #3
International Bowl vs. Big East

BCS Note: The MAC champion receives an automatic bid to a BCS bowl (Rose, Fiesta, Orange, or Sugar) by finishing in the Top 12 of the final regular-season BCS season ratings, or by finishing in the Top 16 and ahead of one of the BCS conferences.

TOP 10 NFL TALENT

1.	Barry Church	SS	Sr.	Toledo	If he clocks in the 4.5-second range, he's a lock.
2.	Dan LeFevour	QB	Sr.	CMU	Next Roethlisberger or Charlie Frye?
3.	MiQuale Lewis	RB	Sr.	Ball State	Repeat of junior season could be worth millions.
4.	James Starks	RB	Sr.	Buffalo	Big enough. Does he have NFL speed?
5.	Naaman Roosevelt	WR	Sr.	Buffalo	Converted QB could be No. 3 receiver in pros.
6.	Davonte Shannon	SS	Jr.	Buffalo	Has skill set to make the jump.
7.	Andre Neblett	DT	Sr.	Temple	Good enough to work in DL rotation.
8.	Antonio Brown	WR-RS	Jr.	CMU	More elusive than Greg Jennings.
9.	Tim Hiller	QB	Sr.	WMU	System QB could make leap with right training.
10.	Eugene Jarvis	RB	Sr.	Kent State	Smaller than Darren Sproles but same kind of heart.

Most Valuable Player	Offensive Player of the Year	Defensive Player of the Year	Newcomer of the Year
Dan LeFevour QB, Central Michigan	Tim Hiller QB, Western Michigan	Nick Bellore LB, Central Michigan	Tyshon Goode WR, Kent State

HONOR ROLL

Most Accurate Passer	Dan LeFevour	Central Michigan
Strongest Arm	Tim Hiller	Western Michigan
Best Scrambler	Dan LeFevour	Central Michigan
Coolest in the Clutch	Dan LeFevour	Central Michigan
Toughest to Bring Down	Eugene Jarvis, RB	Kent State
Best Hands	Stephen Williams, WR	Toledo
Most Dangerous Deep Threat	Bryan Anderson, WR	Central Michigan
Best Pass Blocker	Brady Minturn, OT	Bowling Green
Best Run Blocker	Phillip Swanson, OG	Western Michigan
Best Pass Rusher	Frank Zombo, DE	Central Michigan
Best Cover Corner	Josh Gordy	Central Michigan
Special Teams Demon	Alex Pierre	Buffalo

CENTRAL MICHIGAN CHIPPEWAS

NATIONAL RANK 62

MAC rank: 1 | Record: 8-5 | MAC record: 6-2 (T-2nd, West) | Stadium: Kelly/Shorts Stadium (30,255)

Chippewas in A Box

COACH: Butch Jones — At Central Michigan and overall: 16-11, 2 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Bajakian
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tim Banks
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2007
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2005
RETURNING STARTERS: 18; 6 offense, 10 defense, punter, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Dan LeFevour, WR Antonio Brown, RB Bryan Schroeder, C Collin Miller, LB Nick Bellore, LB Matt Berning, DE Frank Zombo
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Chips have a nice offense behind the passing and running of LeFevour. The defense should be an improved, experience unit behind the hard-hitting of Bellore and the solid pressure provided by Zombo.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: LeFevour could use some help from the ground game. He finished as the team's leading rusher last year and had 168 carries. Bryan Schroeder must step up and take the pressure off of him.

OFFENSE

Central Michigan has been explosive on offense under head coach Butch Jones, who enters his third season having won eight games in each of his first two years. The Chippewas have scored 30 or more points 16 times in that span.

The key to the offense is quarterback Dan LeFevour, who returns after an excellent junior season in which he completed 251 of 376 passes for 2,784 yards with 21 touchdowns and six interceptions. LeFevour is also a solid running threat, having led the Chips with 592 rushing yards and six touchdowns last year.

The pros have their eyes on LeFevour, who might be the next-best senior quarterback prospect after, in some order, Colt McCoy and Tim Tebow.

Wide receivers Bryan Anderson and Antonio Brown should be LeFevour's top targets. Anderson caught 63 passes for 865 yards and six touchdowns in 2008, while Brown was even better, catching 93 passes for 998 yards and seven touchdowns. Brown is a speedy receiver with breakaway ability.

Kito Poblah also figures in the receiving chores after catching 43 passes a year ago.

Bryan Schroeder is a key man, because the sophomore running back has to give Central Michigan more balance. He rushed for 208 yards and averaged 3.5 yards per carry last season; Jones is expecting more.

The line is led by junior center Collin Miller, a powerful blocker with an aggressive attitude.

Freshman Jake Olson is slated to start at left tackle, a difficult assignment for an inexperienced player. Olson should get plenty of help from junior guard Jeff Maddux, who returns to the starting lineup after a solid year in 2008. Maddux, at 313 pounds, is one of the biggest interior blockers in the MAC.

DEFENSE

The Chips appear to have an advantage over many of their MAC adversaries because they return 10 defensive starters.

Linebacker Nick Bellore returns to the weakside position after a dominant season. He had 148 tackles, including 5.5 for loss, and two forced fumbles. Bellore moves very well from sideline to sideline and is a reliable tackler.

Defensive end Frank Zombo might be the most dangerous man in the defensive lineup. He had a team-high 15.5 tackles for loss a year ago and showed fine closing speed on the quarterback. He had nine sacks.

Middle linebacker Matt Berning is another reliable tackler. He had 70 stops and two fumble recoveries. Berning is usually in the right position to make the tackle.

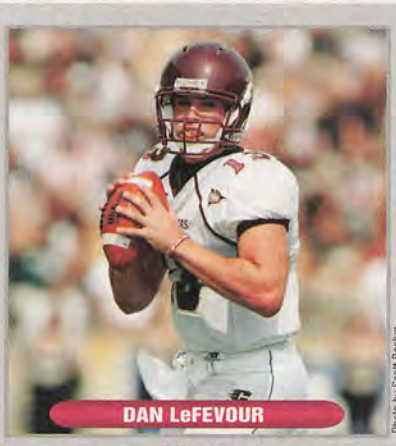
Cornerback Josh Gordy should be prepared for a big senior year after coming up with 47 tackles, six pass breakups and one interception in 2008.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Andrew Aguila is one of the most reliable kickers in the MAC. He made 44 of 46 extra points last year and 16 of 21 field goal attempts. Punter Brett Hartmann is a big man with a big leg. He averaged 40 yards per punt a year ago with a long of 65 yards.

OVERVIEW

LeFevour should be one of the top quarterbacks in the nation, and the receivers are explosive. The Chips are solid defensively and know how to come up with the stop at key moments. Central Michigan has done very well in two years under Jones, and the Chippewas enter the season as the favorite to win the MAC.



DAN LeFEVOUR

Photo by Scott Boehm

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Dan LeFevour***	**6-3**	**229**	**Sr.**
	Ryan Radcliff	6-2	195	Fr.
RB	Bryan Schroeder	5-9	212	So.
	Paris Cotton	5-9	175	So.
TE	David Blackburn	6-3	232	So.
	Chris Starkey	6-3	237	Jr.
WR	**Bryan Anderson***	**6-5**	**213**	**Sr.**
	Jerry Harris	6-1	182	Fr.
WR	**Kito Poblah***	**6-2**	**197**	**Jr.**
	Jeremy Wilson	6-3	213	So.
WR	**Antonio Brown***	**5-10**	**179**	**Jr.**
	Jahleel Addae	5-9	176	Fr.
LT	Jake Olson	6-8	268	Fr.
	Matt Kanitz	6-6	260	So.
LG	**Jeff Maddux***	**6-5**	**313**	**Jr.**
	Todd Johnson	6-4	295	Sr.
C	**Collin Miller***	**6-3**	**287**	**Jr.**
	Darren Keyton	6-3	275	Fr.
RG	Allen Ollenburger	6-4	283	Sr.
	Jeff Fantuzzi	6-4	280	Fr.
RT	Rocky Weaver	6-6	253	So.
	Mike Repovz	6-4	243	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Sam Williams***	**6-3**	**241**	**Sr.**
	Kashawn Fraser	6-3	215	So.
DT	**Sean Murnane***	**6-1**	**258**	**Jr.**
	Steve Winston	6-3	235	Fr.
NG	John Williams	6-0	270	So.
	Steve Winston	6-3	235	Fr.
DE	**Frank Zombo***	**6-4**	**260**	**Sr.**
	Larry Knight	6-4	248	Sr.
LB	**Nick Bellore***	**6-1**	**245**	**Jr.**
	Mike Petrucci	6-2	218	So.
LB	**Matt Berning***	**6-0**	**233**	**Jr.**
	Mike Petrucci	6-2	218	So
LB	**Tommy Mama***	**5-10**	**184**	**Sr.**
	Chaz West	5-10	175	Jr.
CB	**Taylor Bradley***	**6-0**	**180**	**Jr.**
	LaVarus Williams	5-11	185	Fr.
CB	**Josh Gordy***	**5-11**	**190**	**Sr.**
	Kirkston Edwards	6-1	186	Sr.
SS	**Dannie Bolden***	**5-11**	**189**	**So.**
	Bobby Seay	5-11	184	Jr.
FS	**Eric Fraser***	**6-1**	**201**	**Sr.**
	John Carr	6-2	180	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Andrew Aguila***	**5-11**	**175**	**Sr.**
P	**Brett Hartmann***	**6-4**	**220**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	at Arizona
Sept. 12	at Michigan State
Sept. 19	ALCORN STATE
Sept. 26	AKRON
Oct. 3	at Buffalo
Oct. 10	EASTERN MICHIGAN
Oct. 17	at Western Michigan
Oct. 24	at Bowling Green
Oct. 31	at Boston College
Nov. 11	TOLEDO
Nov. 18	at Ball State
Nov. 27	NORTHERN ILLINOIS

2008 Results

	(8-5, 6-2)	
W	EASTERN ILLINOIS	31-12
L	at Georgia	17-56
W	at Ohio	31-28
L	at Purdue	25-32
W	BUFFALO	27-25
W	TEMPLE	24-14
W	WESTERN MICHIGAN	38-28
W	at Toledo	24-23
W	at Indiana	37-34
W	at Northern Illinois (OT)	33-30
L	BALL STATE	24-31
L	at Eastern Michigan	52-56
	Motor City Bowl	
L	vs. Florida Atlantic	21-24

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	29.5	38
Rushing	133.7	72
Passing	289.8	12
Total	423.5	23
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	30.2	89
Rushing	136.5	49
Passing	287.2	118
Total	423.7	104
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 4	+ 0.31	42

WESTERN MICHIGAN BRONCOS

NATIONAL RANK 74

MAC rank: 2 | Record: 9-4 | MAC record: 6-2 (T-2nd, West) | Stadium: Waldo Stadium (30,200)

Broncos in A Box

COACH: Bill Cubit — At Western Michigan: 29-20, 4 years; overall: 63-38-1, 9 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bill Cubit
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Steve Morrison
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1988
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2006
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 7 offense, 3 defense, punter, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Tim Hiller, RB Brandon West, P Ben Armer, OT Anthony Parker, DE Justin Braska, LB Mitch Zajac
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Broncos had a strong offensive team a year ago and have the ability to be dominant again this year. Tim Hiller, with a strong arm and a quick release, returns at quarterback and should contend for All-MAC honors. He will enter his senior season projected as a mid-round NFL Draft pick.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: There could be some significant issues on defense, where the Broncos lost eight starters, including All-MAC defensive back Louis Delmas, from a unit that gave up nearly 400 yards per game last season. There will be significant pressure on Austin Pritchard and the other linebackers to be leaders of the unit.

OFFENSE

The Broncos will go as far as their offense will take them. It's not that the defense can't come around, but the offense returns seven starters, including senior quarterback Tim Hiller.

Hiller has already thrown for 8,080 yards and 76 touchdowns in his career. More than the numbers, Hiller's experience makes him dangerous. He has a great understanding of Bill Cubit's offense and does a good job of holding the ball until the last possible second in order to find the open man.

The running game should give Hiller plenty of support. Cubit is counting on the 1-2 punch of senior Brandon West, who rushed for a team-high 1,026 yards last year, and sophomore Aaron Winchester to keep opposing defenses honest. Both are power backs who can break free, and they are also solid pass catchers.

Third-team All-MAC wide receiver Juan Nunez should be the top receiving threat. Nunez caught 57 passes for 701 yards and seven touchdowns last season. He had plays of at least 30 yards in seven games.

Redshirt freshman Seth Patterson has a good chance to see significant action at receiver, as does converted quarterback Robert Arnheim. Matt Stevens will get the call at tight end. He only had six catches last year but proved dependable as a goal-line weapon, scoring two touchdowns on those six catches.

Jamelle Murray, a 5-8 receiver, returned in the spring after sitting out the 2008 season recovering from a bout with Hodgkin's lymphoma. Murray, in one of the feel-good stories of college football spring, caught six passes for 67 yards in the final scrimmage.

Guard Philip Swanson returns to lead the line, along with offensive tackle Anthony Parker, guard Nick Clemens and center Paul Wasikowski. The line is strong, versatile and athletic.

DEFENSE

The Broncos will have to invent themselves on the fly. They have only three returning starters, but they do have quite a few players who played key backup roles.

Defensive end Justin Braska is a significant playmaker. Braska had 52 tackles last year, including 10 tackles for loss and six sacks. Defensive tackle Cody Cielenski lines up next to Braska and he had 36 tackles — 10 behind the line of scrimmage.

The linebacker position should be the primary strength. First-team All-MAC selection Austin Pritchard returns after finishing second on the team with 86 tackles a year ago and registering a team-high 12.5 tackles behind the line. Mitch Zajac started five games as a freshman and had 29 tackles.

Sophomore defensive back Josh Price, who had 18 tackles last year in a backup role, returns to a secondary that lost three All-MAC performers. This is a major area of concern.

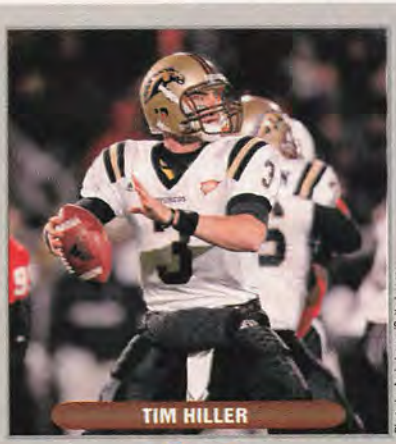
SPECIAL TEAMS

Punter Ben Armer returns after averaging 40.6 yards on 50 punts a year ago. He hopes to be more consistent after several shanks hurt his average last season.

John Potter connected on 11 of 16 field goals as a true freshman last year and has the kind of leg that allows coaches to try for long attempts, even from plus-50 yards.

OVERVIEW

There is a fair of amount of rebuilding to do. Western Michigan loses six players who were first- or second-team All-MAC, but the Broncos have been to two straight bowl games and should be MAC contenders again because of an explosive offense led by quarterback Tim Hiller.



TIM HILLER

Photo by Andy Lyons/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Tim Hiller***	**6-5**	**228**	**Sr.**
	Drew Burdi	6-1	198	Jr.
RB	**Brandon West***	**5-10**	**188**	**Sr.**
	Aaron Winchester	5-9	190	So.
WR	**Juan Nunez***	**6-0**	**172**	**Jr.**
	Scott Hinds	6-3	190	Fr.
WR	Robert Arnheim	6-2	195	So.
	Ansel Ponder	6-2	187	Fr.
WR	Seth Patterson	6-3	185	Fr.
	Dervon Wallace	6-0	180	So.
TE	Matt Stevens	6-4	243	Sr.
	Chad Baliko	6-3	239	Sr.
LT	**Anthony Parker***	**6-5**	**305**	**So.**
	Philip Swanson	6-4	307	Jr.
LG	**Philip Swanson***	**6-4**	**307**	**Jr.**
	Sam Jaeger	6-5	321	Fr.
C	**Paul Wasikowski***	**6-3**	**291**	**Sr.**
	Nick Mitchell	6-1	290	Jr.
RG	**Nick Clemens***	**6-5**	**307**	**Jr.**
	Kevin Galeher	6-5	295	Fr.
RT	Jonathan Jack	6-6	340	So.
	Ben Samson	6-5	345	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Justin Braska***	**6-4**	**234**	**Sr.**
	Jason Polmanteer	6-4	235	Fr.
DT	Cody Cielenski	6-2	280	Sr.
	Chris Pyant	6-3	269	Jr.
DT	Drew Nowak	6-4	250	So.
	Ryan Byrne	6-0	275	Fr.
DE	Weston Peiffer	6-4	245	So.
	T.J. Lynch	6-3	238	So.
LB	Harrison Porter	6-0	220	Jr.
	Waymon Ross	6-1	225	Fr.
LB	**Mitch Zajac***	**6-1**	**220**	**So.**
	Matt Pickens	6-0	215	Jr.
LB	**Austin Pritchard***	**6-4**	**233**	**Sr.**
	Waymon Ross	6-1	225	Fr.
CB	Josh Price	6-0	195	So.
	Deshon Lawrence	6-0	175	So.
CB	David Lewis	5-10	170	So.
	Andy Dorcely	6-0	194	Sr.
SS	Mario Armstrong	6-0	188	Jr.
	Keith Dixson	6-1	185	So.
FS	Doug Wiggins	6-0	180	Jr.
	Jamail Berry	6-0	190	Jr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**John Potter***	**6-2**	**195**	**So.**
P	**Ben Armer***	**5-10**	**201**	**So.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	at Michigan
Sept. 12	at Indiana
Sept. 19	MIAMI (OH)
Sept. 26	HOFSTRA
Oct. 3	at Northern Illinois
Oct. 10	at Toledo
Oct. 17	CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Oct. 24	BUFFALO
Oct. 31	at Kent State
Nov. 7	at Michigan State
Nov. 14	at Eastern Michigan
Nov. 24	BALL STATE

2008 Results

	(9-4, 6-2)	
L	at Nebraska	24-47
W	NORTHERN ILLINOIS	29-26
W	at Idaho	51-28
W	TENNESSEE TECH	41-7
W	at Temple	7-3
W	OHIO	41-20
W	at Buffalo (OT)	34-28
L	at Central Michigan	28-38
W	EASTERN MICHIGAN	31-10
W	ILLINOIS	23-17
W	TOLEDO	27-17
L	at Ball State	22-45
	Texas Bowl	
L	vs. Rice	14-38

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	28.6	41
Rushing	116.9	96
Passing	294.7	11
Total	411.5	28
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.9	62
Rushing	140.5	62
Passing	254.9	102
Total	395.3	87
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 5	- 0.38	85

BOWLING GREEN FALCONS

NATIONAL RANK 82

MAC rank: 3 | Record: 6-6 | MAC record: 4-4 (T-2nd, East) | Stadium: Perry Stadium (24,000)

Falcons in A Box

COACH: Dave Clawson — At Bowling Green: 1st year; overall: 58-49, 9 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Warren Ruggiero
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Mike Elko, Shannon Morrison
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1992
LAST BOWL: 2007 season, GMAC
RETURNING STARTERS: 11; 7 offense, 3 defense, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Tyler Sheehan, WR Freddie Barnes, RB Chris Bullock, OG Shane Steffy, OT Brady Minturn, LB Jerett Sanderson, DB Jahmal Brown, DB P.J. Mahone
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The offense shouldn't be a problem, despite glitches in adapting to Clawson's system in spring ball. Much is expected of third-year starter Sheehan. The playmakers on defense will be enough some weeks — especially if the cornerback spots are stabilized.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The September schedule could puncture the team's confidence. Not having a known starting commodity at cornerback or running back is a problem, but not one without a solution.

OFFENSE

Tyler Sheehan, the constant in the Bowling Green offense, enters his third season as the Falcons' starter. But this will be his first in new coach Dave Clawson's system.

Former coach Gregg Brandon's offense relied on a high-percentage, high-frequency passing offense. Clawson, formerly Tennessee's offensive coordinator, won't take the ball out of Sheehan's hands, but balance is his goal. A tight end — and even a fullback will be part of the base offense in most games.

Sheehan has the size to be an NFL prospect. He has a career completion percentage of 64.5 with 43 touchdown passes in 25 starts. Top target Freddie Barnes (142 career catches) will remain in a runner/receiver role. Fifth-year senior Calvin Wiley was back from a knee injury in spring drills after being a non-factor last season.

Seven of tight end Jimmy Scheidler's 17 catches went for touchdowns in '08. None of the other returning receivers had more than one touchdown catch.

The running back job is up for grabs, but Clawson wants two or three starting-caliber options in the mix. Sheehan led the team with 105 carries in 2008. Chris Bullock (92 carries, 384 yards in '08) ended the offseason with a two-TD spring game. But he's been unreliable in a lead role before and must hold off junior Willie Geter.

The line, anchored by left-side veterans Shane Steffy and Brady Minturn, will have an all-new right side.

DEFENSE

Freshmen won't have to carry the defense. But Clawson didn't hesitate to tell the incoming class to prepare for some heavy lifting.

"At every level on defense, we are going to need a freshman to contribute," he said.

One player who could be a starter — cornerback Robert Lorenzi — wasn't available this spring because he wasn't all the way back from a broken leg suffered last August. Another player who could have been a starter — defensive tackle Michael Ream — was kicked off the team.

The team's top cornerbacks both graduated. Safeties P.J. Mahone and Jahmal Brown are the stars on defense. The linebacking corps of Jerett Sanderson, Cody Basler and James Schneider has starting experience.

Schneider, a junior college standout before transferring in last season, consistently caught Clawson's eye in April practices.

Mahone had 95 tackles to lead the Falcons in '08, and Brown (83) was third.

How the D-line takes shape in fall camp is the storyline to watch.

So far, only Nick Torresso and Angelo Magnone are sure things for a unit that could include a gaggle of freshmen.

SPECIAL TEAMS

There's still no established pecking order at placekicker. Freshman Jerry Phillips is the favorite to handle placement kicks but kickoff chores aren't set. The punting job remains in the trusted hands of Nick Iovinelli, whose 40.4-yard average last season was a bright spot for an otherwise average kicking game.

Roger Williams wants to work into the cornerback picture, but his value on special teams is undeniable. He'll become the top returner — in terms of chances and yards gained — in team history this season.

OVERVIEW

If Bowling Green doesn't walk into the MAC season bandaged — Troy, Boise State and Missouri line the early schedule — there is enough talent here to compete for a division championship.

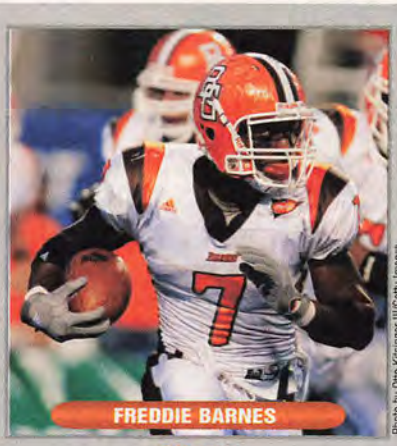

FREDDIE BARNES

Photo by Otto Kitsinger III/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Tyler Sheehan***	**6-3**	**225**	**Sr.**
	Andrew Beam	6-4	230	Sr.
RB	**Chris Bullock***	**5-11**	**220**	**Sr.**
	Willie Geter	5-8	170	Jr.
WR	**Freddie Barnes***	**6-0**	**212**	**Sr.**
	Adrian Hodges	5-11	183	So.
WR	Chris Wright	5-10	190	Sr.
	Calvin Wiley	5-11	207	Sr.
WR	Tyrone Pronty	6-0	181	Sr.
	Ray Hutson	6-2	190	So.
TE	**Jimmy Scheidler***	**6-4**	**244**	**Sr.**
	Nick Rieke	6-4	250	Jr.
LT	**Brady Minturn***	**6-4**	**288**	**Sr.**
	Casey McHugh	6-6	275	Jr.
LG	**Shane Steffy***	**6-3**	**302**	**Sr.**
	Chip Robinson	6-6	340	Fr.
C	**Ben Bojicic***	**6-4**	**273**	**So.**
	Marc Stevens	6-5	300	Fr.
RG	Timothy German	6-5	300	Fr.
	Scott Lewis	6-2	301	So.
RT	Tyler Donahue	6-6	281	Jr.
	Blaec Walker	6-5	315	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Angelo Magnone	6-3	235	Jr.
	Carlos Tipton	6-3	230	So.
DT	Nick Torresso	6-3	290	Jr.
	Kevin Alvarado	6-2	263	So.
DT	Andrew Johnson	6-3	257	So.
	Kevin Alvarado	6-2	263	So.
DE	Darius Smith	6-2	217	Jr.
	Carlos Tipton	6-3	230	So.
LB	James Schneider	6-0	221	Sr.
	Anthony Stover	6-2	200	Fr.
LB	Cody Basler	6-3	238	Sr.
	Eugene Fells	6-1	233	Jr.
LB	**Jerett Sanderson***	**6-0**	**189**	**Sr.**
	Aaron Davis	6-2	197	Sr.
CB	Roger Williams	5-9	184	Sr.
	Adrian Spencer	6-0	175	So.
CB	Marquese Quiles	6-0	170	Fr.
	Keith Morgan	6-0	195	So.
SS	**P.J. Mahone***	**5-11**	**201**	**Sr.**
	Calvin Marshall	5-11	190	Jr.
FS	**Jahmal Brown***	**5-10**	**192**	**Sr.**
	Calvin Marshall	5-11	190	Jr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Jerry Phillips***	**6-1**	**195**	**Fr.**
P	Nick Iovinelli	6-0	188	Sr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 3	TROY
Sept. 12	at Missouri
Sept. 19	at Marshall
Sept. 26	BOISE STATE
Oct. 3	OHIO
Oct. 10	at Kent State
Oct. 17	at Ball State
Oct. 24	CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Nov. 3	at Buffalo
Nov. 12	at Miami (OH)
Nov. 20	AKRON
Nov. 27	TOLEDO

2008 Results

	(6-6, 4-4)	
W	at Pittsburgh	27-17
L	MINNESOTA	17-42
L	at Boise State	7-20
W	at Wyoming	45-16
L	EASTERN MICHIGAN	21-24
W	at Akron	37-33
L	MIAMI (OH)	20-27
L	at Northern Illinois	13-16
W	KENT STATE	45-30
W	at Ohio	28-3
L	BUFFALO (OT)	34-40
W	at Toledo	38-10

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.7	44
Rushing	134.0	71
Passing	225.8	48
Total	359.8	60
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	23.2	49
Rushing	162.6	83
Passing	180.8	21
Total	343.4	52
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 0	+ 0.00	62

BUFFALO BULLS

NATIONAL RANK 88

MAC rank: 4 | Record: 8-6 | MAC record: 5-3 (1st, East) | Stadium: UB Stadium (29,013)

Bulls in A Box

COACH: Turner Gill — At Buffalo and overall: 15-23, 3 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Danny Barrett
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Fred Reed
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: None
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 17; 6 offense, 9 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB James Starks, WR Naaman Roosevelt, WR Brett Hamlin, QB Zach Maynard, OT Andrew West, LB Justin Winters, FS Mike Newton, SS Davonte Shannon
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The running game is UB's calling card as long as Starks wears royal blue. The playmaking ability of Roosevelt helps stabilize the offense. The defense can call on experience, especially in the back seven, and should be one of the fastest in the MAC.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The quarterback is brand new to his role, as are three O-line starters. Size is lacking on a defense that relies solely on speed and athleticism to run and hit, a detriment in must-stop, short-yardage spots.

OFFENSE

For the first time in four years, quarterback Drew Willy won't be running the show for the Bulls, but Buffalo doesn't lack leadership.

Running back James Starks is one of five returning senior starters. Starks isn't built like a prototype runner at 6-2, 211, but he's a force who runs behind his pads and has the gait to break away from the secondary in the open field.

He averaged 4.9 yards per carry — he also hauled in 52 catches — and had 16 rushing touchdowns as a junior despite missing three games due to injury.

His backup, Brandon Thermilus, rushed for 454 yards in '08 and carried the mail all spring while Starks recovered from a "minor" surgery.

The team's other top playmaker in 2008, receiver Naaman Roosevelt, demands a lot of attention. He averaged 100.1 receiving yards a game in 2008, when he caught 104 passes for 1,402 yards and 13 touchdowns. Senior flanker Brett Hamlin developed as Willy's third-down security blanket.

Willy's replacement is sophomore Zach Maynard, a mobile lefty. His hold on the No. 1 designation isn't a tight squeeze.

UB squandered his redshirt last season when Willy was temporarily knocked out of the Central Michigan game. But Maynard threw just three passes in live action as a freshman. He is only inches ahead of two redshirt freshmen — Jerry Davis and Cory Jorgensen — on the fall depth chart.

All-MAC guard Jeff Niedermier and two other starters on the O-line, who helped UB set several offensive records in '08, have been replaced.

Sophomore Matt Ostrowski can drive defenders off the ball in the backside running game and won't be on Maynard's blind side. That's the assignment of senior right tackle Andrew West, the line's most experienced starter.

DEFENSE

The Bulls will rely on a unit that forced a Ball State meltdown — and MAC title upset — last season.

Eight upperclassmen are listed as starters on the fall two-deep, and the Bulls have nine returning starters, including the entire back seven.

The secondary should be excellent with all-conference contenders Mike Newton (121 tackles in '08) and junior Davonte Shannon at safety. Shannon was All-MAC as a freshman and sophomore.

One concern that stands above the others is the front four and the overall ability of the Bulls to stand up against power-running teams.

The first-team line has an average weight of around 250 pounds and UB's first-string linebackers — Imani Chatman, Scott Pettigrew and Justin Winters — all tip the scales at less than 216 pounds. Winters had a team-high 125 tackles in '08.

SPECIAL TEAMS

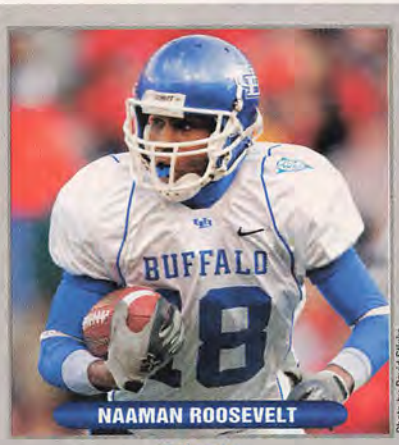
Kicker A.J Principe and punter Peter Fardon, a 26-year-old Australian who started last season as a true freshman, can be weapons in field-position games.

Principe has 27 field goals in his two seasons at UB, where wind and elements can be especially challenging when fall turns brisk. Fardon pinned 23 inside the 20 and forced 13 fair catches.

Alex Pierre could be the premier kick-cover man in the league.

OVERVIEW

Buffalo plans a step forward, building around its senior core on offense to help first-year starting quarterback Zach Maynard adjust on the fly. If the defense holds up against the explosive offenses in the league and James Starks remains healthy, the Bulls contend again for the MAC title.



NAAMAN ROOSEVELT

Photo by David Stuka

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Zach Maynard	6-3	185	So.
	Jerry Davis	6-1	200	Fr.
RB	**James Starks***	**6-2**	**211**	**Sr.**
	Brandon Thermilus	5-11	224	Jr.
FB	Lawrence Rolle	5-10	248	Sr.
	Aaron Simon	6-1	225	Fr.
WR	**Naaman Roosevelt***	**6-0**	**187**	**Sr.**
	Terrell Jackson	5-11	177	So.
WR	**Brett Hamlin***	**6-1**	**190**	**Sr.**
	Marcus River	6-4	204	So.
TE	**Jesse Rack***	**6-3**	**236**	**Sr.**
	Kyle Brey	6-1	247	Jr.
LT	Matt Ostrowski	6-7	296	So.
	Gokhan Ozkan	6-7	300	Fr.
LG	**Peter Bittner***	**6-4**	**301**	**Jr.**
	Tyler Durinka	6-3	290	Fr.
C	Matt Bacoulis	6-3	301	Sr.
	Josh Violanti	6-2	264	So.
RG	Robert Colpoys	6-3	300	Jr.
	Graham Whinery	6-3	260	Fr.
RT	**Andrew West***	**6-6**	**314**	**Sr.**
	Brian Kelly	6-6	312	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Bruno Lapointe	6-5	247	Jr.
	Willie Moseley	6-4	225	Fr.
DT	**Anel Montanez***	**5-11**	**290**	**Jr.**
	Kevin Johnson	6-4	304	Sr.
DT	**Dane Robinson***	**6-2**	**267**	**Sr.**
	Richie Smith	6-2	298	So.
DE	Jaleel Verser	6-6	225	Fr.
	Steven Means	6-3	220	Fr.
LB	**Imani Chatman***	**6-3**	**215**	**So.**
	Raphael Akobundu	5-11	223	Jr.
LB	**Scott Pettigrew***	**6-2**	**210**	**So.**
	Darius Willis	6-3	220	Fr.
LB	**Justin Winters***	**5-11**	**202**	**Jr.**
	John Syty	6-2	200	So.
CB	**Kendric Hawkins***	**5-10**	**184**	**Sr.**
	Josh Thomas	5-10	180	Jr.
CB	**Domonic Cook***	**5-8**	**187**	**Jr.**
	Sherrod Lott	5-9	176	Jr.
SS	**Davonte Shannon***	**6-0**	**193**	**Jr.**
	Ray Anthony Long	6-1	195	So.
FS	**Mike Newton***	**5-11**	**200**	**Sr.**
	Chris Storr	5-11	195	Sr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**A.J. Principe***	**5-8**	**154**	**Jr.**
P	**Peter Fardon***	**6-1**	**180**	**So.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	at UTEP
Sept. 12	PITTSBURGH
Sept. 19	at UCF
Sept. 26	at Temple
Oct. 3	CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Oct. 10	GARDNER-WEBB
Oct. 17	AKRON
Oct. 24	at Western Michigan
Nov. 3	BOWLING GREEN
Nov. 10	OHIO
Nov. 18	at Miami (OH)
Nov. 27	at Kent State

2008 Results

	(8-6, 5-3)	
W	UTEP	42-17
L	at Pittsburgh	16-27
W	TEMPLE	30-28
L	at Missouri	21-42
L	at Central Michigan	25-27
L	WESTERN MICHIGAN (OT)	28-34
W	ARMY (OT)	27-24
W	at Ohio	32-19
W	MIAMI (OH)	37-17
W	at Akron (OT)	43-40
W	at Bowling Green (OT)	40-34
L	KENT STATE	21-24
	MAC Championship Bowl	
W	vs. Ball State	42-24
	International Bowl	
L	vs. Connecticut	20-38

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	30.3	34
Rushing	132.7	75
Passing	237.6	43
Total	370.3	54
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	28.2	77
Rushing	173.0	92
Passing	235.2	90
Total	408.2	94
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 19	+ 1.36	3

BALL STATE CARDINALS

NATIONAL RANK 94

MAC rank: 5 | Record: 12-2 | MAC record: 8-0 (1st, West) | Stadium: Scheumann Stadium (22,500)

Cardinals in A Box

COACH: Stan Parrish — First year at Ball State; overall: 57-42-3, 10 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Eddie Faulkner
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Doug Graber
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1996
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2006
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 4 offense, 7 defense, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB MiQuale Lewis, TE Madaris Grant, WR Briggs Osborn, DE Brandon Crawford, DT Drew Duffin, FS Alex Knipp
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Cardinals had a magnificent season in 2008 and the confidence level throughout the program is high despite a number of key personnel losses. Also, the defensive line returns intact.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The offense appears to be in pretty good shape, but when you lose a quarterback like Nate Davis, that's an issue. Parrish must make the move from offensive coordinator to head coach, and coordinator Eddie Faulkner must take over the offense at the age of 28.

OFFENSE

All the Cardinals have to do is replace their most prolific offensive team ever.

And do it with a new coach and quarterback.

Head coach Stan Parrish replaces Brady Hoke, who left after last year's spectacular 12-win season to take over at San Diego State. Parrish was the high-scoring Cardinals' offensive coordinator, so he knows the personnel well and can make adjustments to the scheme with ease.

Freshman quarterback Kelly Page is the presumptive starter, making his fair share of mistakes this spring, but also winning Parrish's confidence.

"I had high expectations going in and he met those and then went past," Parrish said. "He seems to learn with every pass he throws."

Wide receiver Briggs Orsbon and tight end Madaris Grant should be Page's two best weapons.

Orsbon has good speed and athleticism, catching a team-leading 68 passes for 813 yards and five touchdowns last season. Grant caught 26 passes for 285 yards last year as a freshman, and much more will be expected this season.

Parrish will also give freshman wide receiver Seth White an opportunity. He is fast and athletic and made a good impression during the spring.

In the backfield, Page will get support from explosive senior running back MiQuale Lewis, who ran for 1,736 yards and 22 touchdowns last year. Lewis is short (5-6), but has a solid build. Still, the team took no chances with him this spring, keeping him away from contact.

With four new starters on the line, Parrish will need to find new ways to get Lewis the ball in space. Left guard Michael Switzer is the lone returning starter on the line, which also features freshman left tackle Cameron Lowry.

DEFENSE

New coordinator Doug Graber was concerned about the unit's fundamentals this spring. He had issues with the way his players took on blocks, covered receivers and made plays on the ball. Tackling, which has been an issue in previous years, appears to be a problem once again.

Graber will look to senior free safety Alex Knipp for leadership. Knipp was the team's leading tackler a year ago with 96, including 3.5 for loss. He also intercepted two passes and broke up six others. He teams with strong safety Sean Baker, who had 94 tackles and six interceptions a year ago.

The line returns intact. Defensive end Robert Eddins had 45 tackles, including 6.5 for loss and four sacks a year ago. End Brandon Crawford had eight tackles for loss and three sacks.

Davyd Jones, who had 85 tackles, including 12 for loss last year, is the team's only returning starting linebacker. He's on the small side at 6-1, 210-pounds, but he moves well.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Jake Hogue and Steven Schott are battling at placekicker. Hogue was beaten out by Ian McGarvey a year ago and did not kick in a game, but he was 11 of 19 in 2007. Scott Kovanda is ready to step in at punter after Chris Miller moved on.

OVERVIEW

The Cardinals were the story of the year in the MAC last season until they petered out in the MAC Championship Game (a loss to Buffalo) and the GMAC Bowl (a loss to Tulsa). The loss of quarterback Nate Davis, who left early for the NFL, diminishes expectations, although Ball State should still be one of the best in the league.

MIQUALE LEWIS

Photo by Jamie Sabau/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Kelly Page	6-3	206	Fr.
	Tanner Justice	6-3	200	Sr.
RB	**MiQuale Lewis***	**5-6**	**184**	**Sr.**
	Cory Sykes	5-7	157	So.
WR	Myles Trempe	6-4	200	Jr.
	Seth White	5-10	185	Fr.
WR	**Briggs Orsbon***	**6-0**	**189**	**So.**
	Blaine Koger	5-11	171	Fr.
WR	Daniel Ifft	6-3	183	Jr.
	Jeremy Hill	6-2	174	So.
TE	**Madaris Grant***	**6-5**	**221**	**Sr.**
	Kevin Steinhaus	6-3	237	So.
LT	Cameron Lowry	6-6	269	Fr.
	Chad Davis	6-3	280	Sr.
LG	**Michael Switzer***	**6-5**	**278**	**Jr.**
	Jerrod Gray	6-3	268	So.
C	Kreg Hunter	6-3	300	So.
	Ben Jacoby	6-2	278	So.
RG	Steve Yoder	6-3	304	Fr.
	Dan Manick	6-4	264	Fr.
RT	Travis Arnold	6-8	299	Jr.
	Austin Holtz	6-5	279	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Brandon Crawford***	**6-3**	**260**	**Sr.**
	Drew Duffin	6-3	255	Sr.
RT	**Rene Perry***	**5-11**	**271**	**Jr.**
	Adam Morris	6-0	272	So.
LT	**Drew Duffin***	**6-3**	**255**	**Sr.**
	Kaylon Woods	6-2	258	Jr.
DE	**Robert Eddins***	**6-3**	**224**	**Jr.**
	Jeff Barker	6-5	203	So.
LB	Sam Woodworth	6-2	206	Sr.
	Ryan Hartke	6-4	218	So.
LB	Spain Cosby	5-11	225	Sr.
	John Buckingham	6-1	219	Jr.
LB	**Davyd Jones***	**6-1**	**210**	**Jr.**
	Lorren Womack	6-0	221	So.
CB	Koreen Burch	5-9	170	Jr.
	Joshua Howard	6-1	192	So.
CB	Torieal Gibson	5-9	164	So.
	Jakeem Gregory	5-9	168	Jr.
SS	**Sean Baker***	**6-1**	**204**	**So.**
	Derrick Henry	6-1	190	Jr.
FS	**Alex Knipp***	**6-0**	**194**	**Sr.**
	Kyle Hoke	5-11	197	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Jake Hogue***	**5-9**	**195**	**Jr.**
P	Scott Kovanda	6-3	196	Fr.

*** Returning Starters in Bold**

2009 Schedule

Sept. 3	NORTH TEXAS
Sept. 12	NEW HAMPSHIRE
Sept. 19	at Army
Sept. 26	at Auburn
Oct. 3	TOLEDO
Oct. 10	at Temple
Oct. 17	BOWLING GREEN
Oct. 24	at Eastern Michigan
Oct. 31	OHIO
Nov. 12	at Northern Illinois
Nov. 18	CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Nov. 24	at Western Michigan

2008 Results

	(12-2, 8-0)	
W	NORTHEASTERN	48-14
W	NAVY	35-23
W	at Akron	41-24
W	at Indiana	42-20
W	KENT STATE	41-20
W	at Toledo	31-0
W	at Western Kentucky	24-7
W	EASTERN MICHIGAN	38-16
W	NORTHERN ILLINOIS	45-14
W	at Miami (OH)	31-16
W	at Central Michigan	31-24
W	WESTERN MICHIGAN	45-22
	MAC Championship Game	
L	vs. Buffalo	24-42
	GMAC Bowl	
L	vs. Tulsa	13-45

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	34.9	18
Rushing	184.5	31
Passing	258.0	24
Total	442.5	17
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	20.5	29
Rushing	163.0	84
Passing	205.2	55
Total	368.2	69
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 5	+ 0.36	38

KENT STATE GOLDEN FLASHES

NATIONAL RANK 101

MAC rank: 6 | Record: 4-8 | MAC Record: 3-5 (T-4th, East) | Stadium: Dix Stadium (25,000)

Golden Flashes in A Box

COACH: Doug Martin — At Kent and overall: 19-39, 5 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: A.J. Pratt
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Pete Rekstis
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1972
LAST BOWL: 1972, Tangerine
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 7 offense; 7 defense; punter, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: RB Eugene Jarvis, HB Jameson Konz, WR Tyshon Goode, S Brian Lainhart, MLB Cobrani Mixon
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The home-friendly schedule could be a pal for Kent State's first-year starting quarterback. Eugene Jarvis has been one of the MAC's best ballcarriers since he went for 1,669 yards in 2007. Stocked in the secondary is a good thing being in the spread-happy MAC.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Wide receivers haven't made enough — any? — plays, and the coaches aren't afraid to say as much. Special teams were horrific in 2008, and all four of the principals return in the kicking game. Defense was problematic, especially run defense, against the top teams in the MAC.

OFFENSE

The Golden Flashes have the goods to be, well, good. But the difference between good and great, coach Doug Martin has said for the record, is in the team's group of maligned receivers.

Even without a receiver most would label "great" there are some exceptional pieces that Kent State can build its offense around.

Senior running back Eugene Jarvis averaged 145 rushing yards in the four games he had more than 20 carries last season, but he missed three games and doesn't have the frame to hold up for 250 carries in a season.

If he does last a full season — and at 5-5, 170 pounds that could be tough — the results should please Martin. Jarvis ran for nearly 1,700 yards two years ago as a sophomore. This fall, he'll be spelled by Andre Flowers.

The line, with four starters back, is an asset. Behind the front wall, Kent State was 11th in the nation in rushing in '08.

There are big changes at quarterback and a myriad of questions surrounding the receiving corps.

Giorgio Morgan has a big arm, but the sophomore was a redshirt last season and is only proven in a clipboard-carrying role. Senior Anthony Magazu and athletic sophomore Sal Battles are still in the quarterback competition.

Freshman Tyshon Goode emerged as a big-play threat in spring drills at receiver, but there isn't a lot of proven production at the position.

DEFENSE

Junior safety Brian Lainhart has All-MAC credentials and should be the quarterback of a defense that was consistently overwhelmed in 2008.

Lainhart is one of three returning starters in a polished secondary that welcomes sophomore Josh Pleasant — a name highlighted often in spring practices.

If linebacker Cobrani Mixon, a transfer from Michigan, can add muscle in the middle and the defensive line rotation comes together — KSU lacks depth on the line — Martin could be smiling come November.

Red-zone defense became a hot-button issue late last season and KSU was 12th in the conference in that category. Mixon and Pleasant add speed to the flanks, but the tell-tale positions are on the edges.

The Flashes have new starters at their "Buck" defensive end position and weakside linebacker. Those players will be relied on to be part of the fix.

SPECIAL TEAMS

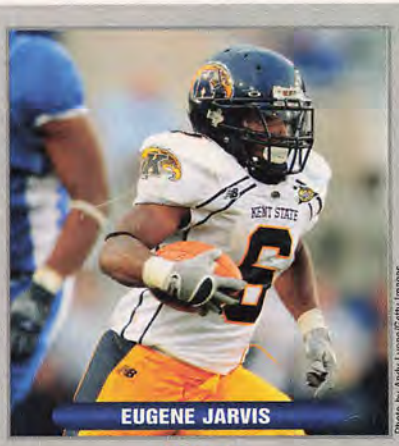
Eugene Jarvis can return punts, but the Flashes don't want to force him into a full-time role considering the high expectations for him as a running back.

The kicking game will be watched closely. Senior placekicker Nate Reed and sophomore punter Matt Rinehart were unspectacular last season. Reed is just 27 of 41 on field goals in his career. He has the leg to try from 50 yards, but his accuracy on mid-range kicks leaves something to be desired.

Rinehart had two punts blocked last season, but averaged 40 yards per punt.

OVERVIEW

Five of the Flashes' first seven foes have first-year head coaches and many of their early season dates are at Dix Stadium. Martin has to notice the rash of new faces around the conference and understand what another down season could mean to his future. But if Giorgio Morgan can replace Julian Edelman, KSU can compete.



EUGENE JARVIS

Photo by Andy Lyons/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Giorgio Morgan	6-4	207	So.
	Anthony Magazu	6-3	199	Sr.
RB	**Eugene Jarvis***	**5-5**	**170**	**Sr.**
	Andre Flowers	5-11	211	Jr.
HB	Jameson Konz	6-3	222	Sr.
	Markus Burton	6-2	215	So.
WR	Kendrick Pressley	5-10	175	So.
	Phil Garner*	**5-11**	**182**	**Sr.**
WR	Derek McBryde	5-11	186	Sr.
	Tyshon Goode	6-1	180	Fr.
TE	**Jonathan Simpson***	**6-5**	**237**	**Jr.**
	Lester Troutman	6-2	216	Sr.
LT	Kent Cleveland	6-4	294	Fr.
	Josh Kline	6-3	289	Fr.
LG	**Michael Fay***	**6-4**	**294**	**So.**
	Charles Laster	6-7	326	Fr.
C	**Chris Anzevino***	**6-2**	**308**	**So.**
	Matt Conroy	6-2	275	Sr.
RG	**Mike Roder***	**6-4**	**302**	**Sr.**
	Dante Campbell	6-1	284	Sr.
RT	**Pat Reedy***	**6-4**	**270**	**Jr.**
	Seamus Garvey	6-6	277	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Zach Williams	6-3	255	Jr.
	Ryan Jude	6-2	255	Fr.
NT	**Sam Frist***	**6-4**	**281**	**Sr.**
	Quinton Rainey	5-11	235	Jr.
DT	**Aaron Hull***	**6-0**	**291**	**Sr.**
	Ishmaa'ily Kitchen	6-3	301	So.
DE	Monte Simmons	6-3	223	Jr.
	Kevin Hogan*	**6-3**	**228**	**Sr.**
LB	Anthony Mirando	6-2	235	Sr.
	Will Johnson	6-0	198	Jr.
LB	**Cobrani Mixon***	**6-1**	**230**	**Jr.**
	Howard Bowens	6-0	210	Jr.
LB	Dorian Wood	6-1	232	Jr.
	Byron Tyson	5-11	207	So.
CB	Josh Pleasant	5-10	178	So.
	Sidney Saulter	6-0	173	Fr.
CB	**Danny Sadler***	**5-10**	**190**	**Sr.**
	B.G. Walters	5-7	175	Sr.
SS	**Dan Hartman***	**6-2**	**205**	**Jr.**
	Adam Richey	5-11	191	Sr.
FS	**Brian Lainhart***	**6-1**	**207**	**Jr.**
	Leon Green	5-11	209	Fr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Nate Reed***	**5-8**	**191**	**Sr.**
P	**Matt Rinehart***	**5-9**	**160**	**So.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 3	COASTAL CAROLINA
Sept. 12	at Boston College
Sept. 19	IOWA STATE
Sept. 26	MIAMI (OH)
Oct. 3	at Baylor
Oct. 10	BOWLING GREEN
Oct. 17	at Eastern Michigan
Oct. 24	at Ohio
Oct. 31	WESTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 7	at Akron
Nov. 21	at Temple
Nov. 27	BUFFALO

2008 Results

(4-8, 3-5)

L	BOSTON COLLEGE	0-21
L	at Iowa State	28-48
W	DELAWARE STATE	24-3
L	at Louisiana-Lafayette	27-44
L	at Ball State	20-41
L	AKRON (2OT)	27-30
L	OHIO	19-26
W	at Miami (OH)	54-21
L	at Bowling Green	30-45
W	TEMPLE	41-38
L	NORTHERN ILLINOIS	14-42
W	at Buffalo	24-21

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.7	57
Rushing	230.6	11
Passing	169.7	98
Total	400.3	36
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	31.7	98
Rushing	178.7	97
Passing	216.5	76
Total	395.2	86
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 3	- 0.25	77

OHIO BOBCATS

NATIONAL RANK 102

MAC rank: 7 | Record: 4-8 | MAC record: 3-5 (T-5th, East) | Stadium: Peden Stadium (24,000)

Bobcats in A Box

COACH: Frank Solich — At Ohio 23-26, 4 years; overall: 81-45, 10 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tim Albin
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jimmy Burrow
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1968
LAST BOWL: 2006, GMAC
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 6 offense, 6 defense, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Boo Jackson, QB Theo Scott, DB Donovan Fletcher, RB Chris Garrett, WR LaVon Brazill, WR Taylor Price, LB Noah Keller
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Bobcats have good experience and multiple senior options at quarterback. The return game, and wide receiver depth, is special by MAC standards.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: While the defense should be better than the 27-points-per-game abuse it took last season, depth isn't a strength and the defensive line lacks experience. If a difference-maker can't be found at running back, the offense appears to be to pass-focused.

OFFENSE

The quarterback competition between seniors Boo Jackson and Theo Scott grabbed headlines all spring, but the real story on offense is that it might not matter who coach Frank Solich picks.

In the end, it's everybody else who figures to be the engine of the offense.

Solich, of course, wants to run. He was, after all, an option fullback in the Big Eight and coached at Nebraska. But that doesn't mean he can't try new things.

Solich wants mobility and "escapability" in his quarterback with the offense no longer predicated on power running between the tackles. It might not involve a fullback or lead blocker. However, Solich will scratch the run itch when the 'Cats get a lead.

The team's top four running backs — and receivers — are back.

Chris Garrett is elusive with big-play speed. Whether he's a niche back or the bell-cow for Solich will be determined early in the season. Garrett had a good spring even when the offensive line crumbled to the point the Bobcats couldn't conduct a scrimmage with their seven healthy blockers.

Garrett was the lead back last season, rushing 117 times for 529 yards and five touchdowns.

LaVon Brazill and Taylor Price, the team's top receivers, were hampered by minor leg injuries most of the spring. That opened opportunities for Serggio Judkins and Riley Dunlop. The pair of underclassmen has forced the team to work in more three- and four wide receiver sets.

DEFENSE

Ohio is reshuffling some on defense with six starters returning, but the beacon among ball stoppers is sophomore middle linebacker Noah Keller. He is staying put after making 104 tackles last season.

Second-round NFL draft pick Michael Mitchell and Mark Parson were standouts in the Ohio secondary. With both out of the mix, Solich wants to develop multiple options.

One of his leading choices at cornerback this spring became Travis Carrie. The ex-safety played nickel back his freshman season. He looked comfortable going man-up on the outside in spring ball.

One of the standouts in the spring game was defensive back Donovan Fletcher, a two-way player in high school who arrived at Ohio in 2006 but didn't play in his first two seasons.

Little is expected of the Bobcats' defensive line, although Solich has had success polishing raw talent up front in the past.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Bobcats are going with redshirt freshman kicker Matt Weller, which is cause for some unwanted adventure in the MAC. However, veteran punter Matt Schulte put together a consistent spring and has two years of starting experience under his belt.

The return game, one of the MAC's best in '08, boasts LaVon Brazill on punts (16.5 per return) and slippery back Chris Garrett on kickoffs. He's a home-run threat who averaged nearly 27 yards per kickoff return last season.

OVERVIEW

The 'Cats are changing identity on offense, no matter who takes over at quarterback, to include more of a base-spread look. That's not typical Solich, but it might be the jolt Ohio needs to compete in the East. Now, about that defense ...

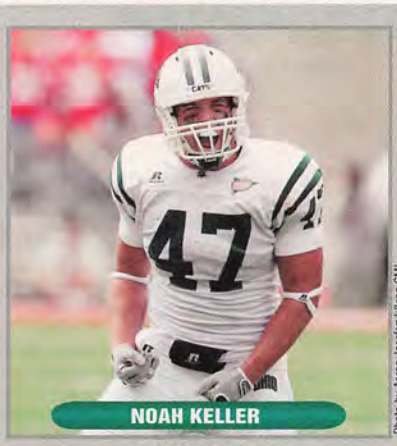

NOAH KELLER

Photo by Aaron Josefczyk/Icon SMI

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Boo Jackson***	**6-1**	**199**	**Sr.**
	Theo Scott	6-2	209	Sr.
RB	**Chris Garrett***	**5-8**	**190**	**Sr.**
	Donte Harden	5-11	174	So.
FB	Mitch Morsillo	6-1	247	Sr.
	Vince Davidson	5-11	186	Jr.
WR	**Taylor Price***	**6-1**	**209**	**Sr.**
	Terrence McCrae	6-4	199	Jr.
WR	**LaVon Brazill***	**5-11**	**185**	**Jr.**
	Riley Dunlop	6-2	184	So.
TE	Jordan Thompson	6-4	249	Fr.
	Jahan Olyaie	6-3	221	So.
LT	Chris Rodgers	6-5	285	Sr.
	Eric Herman	6-4	290	Fr.
LG	Gary Schussler	6-3	287	Sr.
	Vince Carlotta	6-4	270	Fr.
C	David White	6-1	294	Sr.
	Matt Britain	6-3	287	Fr.
RG	**Mike Philibin***	**6-4**	**300**	**Sr.**
	John Flowers	6-3	275	So.
RT	**Cole Bunner***	**6-5**	**321**	**Jr.**
	Joe Flading	6-4	291	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Kris Luchsinger***	**6-4**	**258**	**Sr.**
	Conor Reilly	6-3	234	Sr.
DT	**Ernie Hodge***	**6-2**	**292**	**Jr.**
	Jeff King	6-1	272	So.
NG	Marcellis Williamson	6-1	342	Jr.
	Corey Moncrief	6-2	308	Sr.
DE	Curtis Meyers	6-2	252	Jr.
	Dak Notestine	6-3	250	Jr.
LB	**Lee Renfro***	**5-10**	**210**	**Sr.**
	Jay Edwards	6-0	214	So.
LB	**Noah Keller***	**6-1**	**236**	**Jr.**
	Brandon Weaver	6-2	210	So.
LB	Errik Ejike	6-1	216	Sr.
	Alphonso Lewis	6-1	206	Fr.
CB	Idris Lawrence	5-8	174	Sr.
	Shannon Ballard	5-11	186	Jr.
CB	**Thad Turner***	**6-0**	**169**	**Sr.**
	Travis Carrie	6-0	201	So.
SS	Patrick Tafua	6-0	197	Sr.
	Hilton Dawson III	6-0	200	Jr.
FS	**Steven Jackson***	**6-2**	**192**	**Sr.**
	Donovan Fletcher	6-0	192	Jr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Matt Weller	6-0	202	Fr.
P	**Matt Schulte***	**6-0**	**227**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	CONNECTICUT
Sept. 12	at North Texas
Sept. 19	CAL POLY
Sept. 26	at Tennessee
Oct. 3	at Bowling Green
Oct. 10	at Akron
Oct. 17	MIAMI (OH)
Oct. 24	KENT STATE
Oct. 31	at Ball State
Nov. 10	at Buffalo
Nov. 21	NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Nov. 27	TEMPLE

2008 Results

(4-8, 3-5)

L	at Wyoming	20-21
L	at Ohio State	14-26
L	CENTRAL MICHIGAN	28-31
L	at Northwestern	8-16
W	VMI	51-31
L	at Western Michigan	20-41
W	at Kent State	26-19
L	at Temple	10-14
L	BUFFALO	19-32
L	BOWLING GREEN	3-28
W	AKRON	49-42
W	at Miami (OH)	41-26

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.1	77
Rushing	128.5	79
Passing	232.9	45
Total	361.4	58
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	27.3	70
Rushing	157.6	81
Passing	191.0	35
Total	348.6	54
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 12	- 1.00	110

TEMPLE OWLS

NATIONAL RANK 104

MAC rank: 8 | Record: 5-7 | MAC record: 4-4 (T-2nd, East) | Stadium: Lincoln Financial Field (68,532)

Owls in A Box

COACH: Al Golden — At Temple and overall: 10-26, 3 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Matt Rhule
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mark D'Onofrio
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1967, Middle Atlantic Conference University Division
LAST BOWL: 1979, Garden State Bowl
RETURNING STARTERS: 17, 7 offense, 8 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Vaughn Charlton, NT Andre Neblett, WR Dy'Onne Crudup, SS Dominique Harris, FS Jaiquawn Jarrett, RB Kee-ayre Griffin, WR Jason Harper, DE Junior Galette
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The defensive line, keyed by Neblett and Galette, should be productive against MAC offenses. Last season's close non-conference losses to bowl-bound UConn and Navy show the Owls can compete ... which the MAC already knew.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Owls need to get off to a good start. A year ago, Temple began the season with a 1-4 record and never learned how to win close games. The team's first conference game is against defending MAC champion Buffalo.

OFFENSE

Although Temple loses a three-year starter in quarterback Adam DiMichele, the Owls should be in good hands with either Vaughn Charlton or Chester Stewart. They each have solid playing experience.

Charlton took over in 2007 as the No. 1 signal caller when DiMichele suffered a season-ending leg injury. Charlton played in seven games, completing 78 of 137 passes for 808 yards and three touchdowns. He redshirted last season.

Stewart started three games last season when DiMichele sustained a separated shoulder. In those games, he connected on 53 of 103 passes for 524 yards and four touchdowns.

Charlton and Stewart ended up as co-starters on the post-spring depth chart and will continue to battle in the fall.

However it plays out, the quarterback will have two solid wide receivers in Jason Harper (33 receptions for 571 yards and three touchdowns) and Dy'Onne Crudup (16 catches for 218 yards and one TD).

Up front, sophomore standout Wayne Tribue started nine games at left guard as a freshman. He could stay there or perhaps end up at center, as Temple looks to replace Alex Derenthal, a four-year starter.

The Owls have several returning running backs, including Lamar McPherson, Kee-ayre Griffin, Joe Jones and Ahkeem Smith, but the team is looking for a little more oomph after its ground attack ranked 109th nationally out of 119 teams.

A spark could come from McPherson, who started three games at linebacker in 2007. He shifted to fullback in the spring of 2008 and then tailback this spring. McPherson, who began his career at Syracuse, ended spring No. 1 on the two-deep.

Griffin rushed for a team-high 394 yards on 96 carries as a true freshman, also scoring five touchdowns. Jones gained 275 yards on 100 carries.

DEFENSE

Nose tackle Andre Neblett is the leader on defense. Neblett, an All-MAC selection last season, had 36 tackles, including 7.5 tackles for loss, along with two forced fumbles.

The line should be the strength of the defense, and Neblett will have a lot of help from end Junior Galette, a senior with 16.5 career sacks.

Alex Joseph is a real hitter at middle linebacker, making 87 tackles last season. One to watch is outside linebacker Amara Kamara, who had a big spring after making 67 stops a year ago.

In the secondary, free safety Jaiquawn Jarrett led the team in tackles with 88. Strong safety Dominique Harris had 66 tackles and a team-high three interceptions. He also had three forced fumbles.

Cornerback Anthony Ferla, who missed last season because of injury, was back in the spring and worked his way to the top of the depth chart. He had 45 tackles in 2007.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Jake Brownell returns at placekicker after making 8 of 14 field goal attempts last season. Jeff Wathne will be in charge of punting — a 40.4-yard average last season — and kicking off.

OVERVIEW

Coach Al Golden has made strides at Temple and has a good nucleus of players returning on both sides of the ball. Temple appears to be close. The Owls lost two games in overtime last season. They lost three more by four points or less. With just a little extra push, Temple can have a winning season.

ANDRE NEBLETT

Photo by Jeff Connor/Icon SMI

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Vaughn Charlton	6-4	235	Jr.
	Chester Stewart	6-3	225	So.
RB	Lamar McPherson	5-11	185	Sr.
	Joe Jones*	**5-11**	**206**	**So.**
WR	Delano Green	5-10	170	Jr.
	Matt Brown	5-5	160	Fr.
WR	**Jason Harper***	**5-9**	**195**	**Sr.**
	Dy'Onne Crudup	5-9	175	Sr.
WR	Michael Campbell	6-2	212	Jr.
	Vaughn Carraway	6-2	192	Fr.
TE	**Steve Maneri***	**6-6**	**271**	**Sr.**
	Matt Balasavage	6-4	258	So.
LT	**Pat Boyle***	**6-5**	**308**	**So.**
	Devin Tyler	6-7	301	Sr.
LG	**Wayne Tribue***	**6-4**	**312**	**So.**
	John Palumbo*	**6-6**	**304**	**So.**
C	Sean Boyle	6-5	310	So.
	Jeremy Schonbrunner	6-3	290	So.
RG	Colin Madison	6-4	310	Jr.
	Steve Caputo	6-5	300	So.
RT	Darius Morris	6-4	305	Jr.
	Derek Dennis*	**6-5**	**316**	**Jr.**

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Junior Galette***	**6-2**	**246**	**Sr.**
	Morkeith Brown	6-6	261	So.
DT	Elisha Joseph	6-3	275	Jr.
	Muhammad Wilkerson	6-5	290	So.
NT	**Andre Neblett***	**6-2**	**295**	**Sr.**
	Brian Sanford*	**6-2**	**279**	**Sr.**
DE	Adrian Robinson	6-2	248	So.
	Morris Blueford	6-4	255	So.
LB	**Amara Kamara***	**6-2**	**232**	**Jr.**
	Quinten White Jr.	6-3	210	So.
LB	**Alex Joseph***	**6-2**	**243**	**Sr.**
	John Haley	6-1	227	Sr.
LB	**Elijah Joseph***	**6-1**	**235**	**Jr.**
	Jordan Martin	6-3	230	Jr.
CB	Jared Williams	5-9	180	So.
	Daryl Robinson	5-9	165	Jr.
CB	Anthony Ferla	5-10	190	Jr.
	Jamal Schulters*	**5-10**	**188**	**Jr.**
SS	Dominique Harris	6-3	215	Sr.
	Marlin Terrell	5-10	187	So.
FS	**Jaiquawn Jarrett***	**6-2**	**195**	**Jr.**
	Kevin Kroboth	6-0	190	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Jake Brownell***	**5-10**	**185**	**Sr.**
P	**Jeff Wathne***	**6-2**	**195**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

SEP. 3	VILLANOVA
Sep. 19	at Penn State
SEP. 26	BUFFALO
Oct. 3	at Eastern Michigan
Oct. 10	BALL STATE
Oct. 17	ARMY
Oct. 24	at Toledo
Oct. 31	at Navy
Nov. 5	MIAMI (OH)
Nov. 13	at Akron
Nov. 21	KENT STATE
Nov. 27	at Ohio

2008 Results

(5-7, 4-4)

W	at Army	35-7
L	CONNECTICUT (OT)	9-12
L	at Buffalo	28-30
L	at Penn State	3-45
L	WESTERN MICHIGAN	3-7
W	at Miami (OH)	28-10
L	at Central Michigan	14-24
W	OHIO	14-10
L	at Navy (OT)	27-33
L	at Kent State	38-41
W	EASTERN MICHIGAN	55-52
W	AKRON	27-6

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	23.4	82
Rushing	95.2	109
Passing	202.9	70
Total	298.1	107
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	23.1	47
Rushing	166.3	87
Passing	221.7	80
Total	388.0	81
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 0	+ 0.00	62

TOLEDO ROCKETS

NATIONAL RANK 107

MAC rank: 9 | Record: 3-9 | MAC record: 2-6 (T-5th, West) | Stadium: Glass Bowl (26,248)

Rockets in A Box

COACH: Tim Beckman — At Toledo and overall, 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Matt Campbell
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Mike Ward, Paul Nichols
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2004
LAST BOWL: 2005, GMAC
RETURNING STARTERS: 20; 9 offense, 9 defense, punter, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Aaron Opelt, WR Stephen Williams, RB DaJuane Collins, RB Morgan Williams, LG Jared DeWalt, LB Archie Donald, S Barry Church
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: There's superstar potential on both sides of the ball. Church — with a strong assist from Donald — could have a profound impact on a turnaround. Stephen Williams, Morgan Williams and Collins bring game-breaking ability to the offense. Opelt's solid play last season has to be encouraging.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The offensive line has five starters back, but no depth. If defenses can corral Stephen Williams, the Rockets look awfully one-dimensional. What happens if the special teams stagger again?

OFFENSE

Quarterback Aaron Opelt can't stack his numbers up against the elite in the MAC, but his senior season could bring more chances to stuff the box score.

Opelt will work a lot in a four-wide receiver offense, albeit one that won't ignore the running game. Toledo's receivers could eventually be a team strength, but it's a unit that is top-heavy entering the fall.

Wide receiver Stephen Williams has 144 catches and 15 touchdowns in the past two seasons. After him, there isn't much depth as fellow wideouts Robin Bailey and Kenny Stafford combined for 21 catches in '08.

The line has all five starters back, including seniors Buster Garrett and Jared DeWalt.

The Rockets plan to run. Their cadre of ball carriers includes senior DaJuane Collins, who averaged 5.5 yards per carry with five touchdowns as a junior. He rushed 127 times for 700 yards.

Nipping at his heels is sophomore Morgan Williams, who ran for 330 yards with two long touchdowns runs against Miami University after Collins went down with an injury. Williams finished the season with 1,010 rushing yards.

Williams' hands could get him more playing time when the Rockets go with a faster-paced, pass-happy offense.

DEFENSE

It was no surprise to see Toledo hire a coach with a strong defensive background. The Rockets were ripped in almost every area of their defense in 2008, yielding 31.4 points and 381 yards per game and totaling just 10 sacks.

Safety Barry Church, regarded as one of the top defensive players in the MAC, could start for most any FBS team. His range and versatility are strengths that coach Tim Beckman will emphasize in his scheme.

Church has a legitimate chance to leave as a four-time All-MAC pick and at least be considered for the big awards — he's on the Bronko Nagurski and Jim Thorpe watch lists.

Linebacker Archie Donald led the team in tackles (119) a year ago and is the vocal leader. Seniors Daris Quinn and Beau Brudzinski are at the other linebacker spot.

Getting better production from the line, a stated goal of Beckman's, is a must if the Rockets are to compete, in the MAC. The line generated minimal push in '08.

SPECIAL TEAMS

As mediocre as the defense was much of last season, Beckman singled out special teams as the unit in need of the most attention.

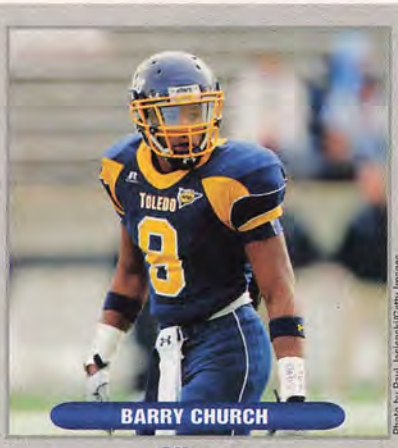
Placekicker Alex Steigerwald made 9 of 11 field goals from 30 to 49 yards last season, with a long of 48 that helped beat Michigan. He was 16 of 21 overall. After Steigerwald, the questions start.

Field position was nightmarish — a key contributor to the defense melting down — and there is pressure on kickoff specialist Brett Brodbeck and punter Bill Claus to help the coverage teams change the Rockets' fortunes.

OVERVIEW

The Rockets are an easy bet to show progress under the optimistic Beckman, but Toledo would need to pull a major shocker to skip Central Michigan, Western Michigan and sleeper candidate Northern Illinois in the East standings.

And this start to the season — Purdue, Colorado and Ohio State — is not built for early speed.



BARRY CHURCH

Photo by Paul Jasienski/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Aaron Opelt***	**6-2**	**225**	**Sr.**
	D.J. Lenehan	6-3	207	So.
RB	**DaJuane Collins***	**5-10**	**211**	**Sr.**
	Morgan Williams	5-11	195	So.
WR	**Stephen Williams***	**6-5**	**199**	**Sr.**
	Sam Gaymon	6-3	200	Fr.
WR	Tim Cortazzo	6-1	180	So.
	Tyler Roby	6-2	210	Sr.
WR	Robin Bailey	6-5	230	Sr.
	Danny Noble	6-5	236	So.
WR	**Kenny Stafford***	**6-4**	**195**	**So.**
	Adonis Thomas	5-10	175	So.
LT	**Mike VanDerMeulen***	**6-7**	**315**	**So.**
	Danny Farr	6-5	285	Fr.
LG	**Jared DeWalt***	**6-4**	**318**	**Sr.**
	Fadi Farha	6-4	290	Fr.
C	**Kevin Kowalski***	**6-4**	**290**	**Jr.**
	Buster Garrett*	**6-3**	**286**	**Sr.**
RG	Nate Cole	6-2	305	Jr.
	PhillipKeith Manley	6-5	310	So.
RT	**John Morookian***	**6-5**	**291**	**So.**
	A.J. Lindeman	6-6	300	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Derrick Summers***	**6-2**	**258**	**Sr.**
	Alex Johnson	6-2	244	Jr.
DT	**Skylaar Constant***	**6-4**	**285**	**Sr.**
	Johnathan Lamb	6-4	258	So.
DT	**Maurice Hill***	**6-2**	**286**	**Sr.**
	Malcolm Riley	6-3	267	So.
DE	Terrell Willis	6-1	228	Jr.
	Douglas Westbrook	6-3	233	Jr.
LB	Beau Brudzinski	6-1	228	Sr.
	Daris Quinn*	**6-1**	**226**	**Sr.**
LB	**Archie Donald***	**6-2**	**235**	**Jr.**
	Damien McIntosh	6-3	222	So.
CB	Andreas Ashwood	6-1	190	So.
	Kenny Veal*	**6-0**	**180**	**So.**
CB	Walter Atkins	6-1	191	Sr.
	Anthony Washington	6-1	175	Fr.
S	**Barry Church***	**6-2**	**219**	**Sr.**
	Isaiah Ballard	5-11	190	So.
SS	**Lester Richmond***	**6-1**	**205**	**Sr.**
	Chris Faison	6-1	176	Jr.
FS	**Mark Singer***	**6-1**	**195**	**So.**
	Joe Shuler	6-2	183	Sr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Alex Steigerwald***	**5-11**	**181**	**Sr.**
P	**Bill Claus***	**6-0**	**187**	**So.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	at Purdue
Sept. 11	COLORADO
Sept. 19	vs. Ohio State (Cleveland, OH)
Sept. 26	at Florida International
Oct. 3	at Ball State
Oct. 10	WESTERN MICHIGAN
Oct. 17	NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Oct. 24	TEMPLE
Oct. 31	at Miami (OH)
Nov. 11	at Central Michigan
Nov. 20	EASTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 27	at Bowling Green

2008 Results

(3-9, 2-6)

L	at Arizona	16-41
W	at Eastern Michigan	41-17
L	FRESNO STATE (2OT)	54-55
L	FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL	16-35
L	BALL STATE	0-31
W	at Michigan	13-10
L	at Northern Illinois	7-38
L	CENTRAL MICHIGAN	23-24
L	at Akron	30-47
L	at Western Michigan	17-27
W	MIAMI (OH)	42-14
L	BOWLING GREEN	10-38

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	22.4	88
Rushing	146.3	60
Passing	187.8	85
Total	334.1	85
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	31.4	97
Rushing	178.3	96
Passing	203.1	53
Total	381.4	77
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 0	+ 0.00	62

NORTHERN ILLINOIS HUSKIES

NATIONAL RANK 109

MAC rank: 10 | Record: 6-7 | MAC record: 5-3 (4th, West) | Stadium: Brigham Field at Huskie Stadium (24,000)

Huskies in A Box

COACH: Jerry Kill – At Northern Illinois: 6-7, 1 year; overall: 110-64, 15 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Matt Limegrover
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tracy Claeys
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: None
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 10; 6 offense, 3 defense, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Chandler Harnish, RB Me'co Brown, C Eddie Adamski, LB Cory Hanson, DE Brandon Bice, DT Mike Krause, S David Bryant
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Huskies should present plenty of matchup problems on offense. Harnish has a strong arm, and his experience from his freshman season makes him dangerous. Brown was improved during the spring and will play an increasing role.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Northern Illinois played solid defense most of last season, but only three starters return and the Huskies lack depth on that side. More than one player is going to have to become a playmaker at receiver.

OFFENSE

Head coach Jerry Kill got the Huskies back on track last year as they were .500 during the regular season, which was good enough to land them a spot in the Independence Bowl against Louisiana Tech.

They dropped that game, but the Huskies brought some excitement back to DeKalb, and the they have a nice, young backfield to build around.

Sophomore quarterback Chandler Harnish had an impressive showing last year, completing 118 of 211 passes for 1,528 yards with eight touchdowns and nine interceptions. He also led the team in rushing with 539 yards.

Sophomore running back Me'co Brown rushed for 510 yards and two touchdowns last year. He looked even better in the spring. Brown (5-7, 180 pounds) has the kind of speed and quickness to break in the open with just a hint of daylight.

The receiving corps is the issue. The Huskies lost five senior wideouts, and Harnish will try to get Landon Cox more involved in the offense. Cox caught 16 passes last year, and he has the size to catch the ball over the top of the defense.

Kill also has high hopes for sophomore wideout Willie Clark, who has good speed but is unproven after catching six passes for 79 yards last season. Senior Marcus Lewis should be a factor.

Tight end Jason Schepler only caught two passes a year ago, but he impressed the coaching staff with his improvement during the spring.

Left tackle Trevor Olson should anchor the line. Senior left guard Jason Onyebuagu is a solid 305 pounds and is one of the better run blockers on the team.

DEFENSE

The Huskies have a lot of work to do on defense after losing significant talent. Kill and defensive coordinator Tracy Claeys had this unit playing aggressively last season as the Huskies held nine opponents to 19 points or less.

But defensive end Larry English is no longer around — he was the 16th overall pick in the NFL Draft. Defensive end Brandon Bice will become more of a key player after a season in which he had 6.5 sacks and earned third-team All-MAC honors.

Junior tackle Mike Krause anchors the middle. He had 20 tackles, including three for loss last year.

Senior linebacker Cory Hanson had 37 tackles, including six for loss. He has the speed to go sideline to sideline and could be an all-conference contender if he can improve his tackling.

David Bryant, who also has played tailback and linebacker, settled in at free safety last year and was the team's leading tackler with 83.

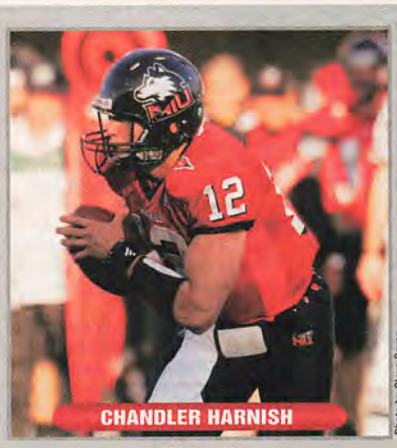
SPECIAL TEAMS

Mike Salerno returns to handle the placekicking chores, and he appears to have the punting duties as well. Salerno made 18 of 24 field goal attempts last season, although he was only 2 of 6 from 40 to 49 yards. He made a 52-yard field goal, his only attempt of more than 50 yards.

Salerno averaged 31 yards per punt as a backup last year. If he struggles, junior Josh Wilber will get an opportunity at the position.

OVERVIEW

The Huskies righted themselves last year, exceeding expectations after a disastrous 2007 season. The young backfield will continue to develop, but the defense likely takes a step back, leaving the Huskies in a fight to have a winning season and get back to the postseason.



CHANDLER HARNISH

Photo by Steve Beyer

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Chandler Harnish***	**6-2**	**210**	**So.**
	DeMarcus Grady	6-1	200	So.
HB	**Me'co Brown***	**5-7**	**180**	**So.**
	Chad Spann	5-9	195	Jr.
FB	Kyle Skarb	6-2	220	Jr.
	Connor Flahive	6-0	240	Jr.
WR	Willie Clark	6-1	190	So.
	Nathan Palmer	5-11	185	So.
WR	**Landon Cox***	**6-3**	**215**	**Jr.**
	Marcus Lewis	6-3	210	Sr.
TE	Jason Schepler	6-3	255	So.
	Bryan Beckner	6-4	260	Jr.
LT	**Trevor Olson***	**6-6**	**290**	**So.**
	Keith Otis	6-4	295	So.
LG	**Jason Onyebuagu***	**6-2**	**305**	**Sr.**
	Logan Pegram	6-3	310	Fr.
C	**Eddie Adamski***	**6-3**	**280**	**Sr.**
	Scott Wedige	6-4	285	So.
RG	Panan Tense	6-4	300	Jr.
	Joe Pawlak	6-5	285	So.
RT	Kevin Skatrud	6-6	330	Sr.
	Adam Kiel	6-5	290	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Brandon Bice	6-4	250	Sr.
	Kyle Jenkins	6-4	256	Jr.
DT	**Mike Krause***	**6-4**	**270**	**Jr.**
	Brian Lawson	6-3	260	Fr.
DT	D.J. Pirkle	6-0	270	Jr.
	Adam Coleman	6-3	245	So.
DE	Jake Coffman	6-5	245	Jr.
	Sean Progar-Jackson	6-3	250	Fr.
LB	Alex Kube	6-0	220	Jr.
	Spencer Williamson	6-4	205	Sr.
LB	Pat Schiller	6-2	225	So.
	Victor Jacques	6-1	210	Fr.
LB	**Cory Hanson***	**6-2**	**225**	**Sr.**
	John Tranchitella	6-1	230	Sr.
CB	Patrick George	5-11	190	Jr.
	Rashaan Melvin	6-2	170	Fr.
CB	Kiaree Daniels	5-10	190	Jr.
	Tommy Davis	5-11	190	Fr.
SS	Tracy Wilson	6-2	200	So.
	Mike Sobol	6-0	195	Jr.
FS	**David Bryant***	**5-11**	**205**	**Sr.**
	Jody Van Laanen	6-0	190	Fr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Mike Salerno***	**5-11**	**165**	**Sr.**
P	Mike Salerno	5-11	165	Sr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	at Wisconsin
Sept. 12	WESTERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 19	at Purdue
Sept. 26	IDAHO
Oct. 3	WESTERN MICHIGAN
Oct. 17	at Toledo
Oct. 24	at Miami (OH)
Oct. 31	AKRON
Nov. 5	EASTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 12	BALL STATE
Nov. 21	at Ohio
Nov. 27	at Central Michigan

2008 Results

	(6-7, 5-3)	
L	at Minnesota	27-31
L	at Western Michigan	26-29
W	INDIANA STATE	48-3
W	at Eastern Michigan	37-0
L	at Tennessee	9-13
W	MIAMI (OH)	17-13
W	TOLEDO	38-7
W	BOWLING GREEN	16-13
L	at Ball State	14-45
L	CENTRAL MICHIGAN (OT)	30-33
W	at Kent State	42-14
L	NAVY	0-16
	Independence Bowl	
L	vs. Louisiana Tech	10-17

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.2	76
Rushing	171.2	36
Passing	163.9	100
Total	335.1	83
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	18.0	14
Rushing	137.4	51
Passing	161.1	5
Total	298.5	17
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 2	+ 0.15	49

AKRON ZIPS

NATIONAL RANK 113

MAC rank: 11 | Record: 5-7 | MAC record: 3-5 (T-4th, East) | Stadium: InfoCision Stadium (30,000)

Zips in A Box

COACH: J.D. Brookhart — At Akron and overall: 27-33, 5 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Shane Montgomery
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jim Fleming
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2005
LAST BOWL: 2005, Motor City
RETURNING STARTERS: 17; 9 offense, 6 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Chris Jacquemain, RB Alex Allen, WR Deryn Bowser, NT Ryan Bain, LB Mike Thomas
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Zips can survive Dennis Kennedy's graduation without replacing his team-high 1,321 rushing yards and 17 touchdowns only if Jacquemain will sacrifice magnificent but brief flashes of brilliance for a full season's worth of efficiency.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Jacquemain has a tendency of trying to do too much. He threw 14 interceptions last season and, if he doesn't let the game come to him, the Zips might be playing inexperienced but talented sophomore Matt Rodgers. With a new offense and the team's many injuries, many questions went unanswered in spring.

OFFENSE

Injuries spoiled the spring and much of the effort made toward establishing cohesion and continuity under first-year coordinator and former Miami (Ohio) coach Shane Montgomery.

Four familiar faces are back on the line to safeguard erratic if not enigmatic quarterback Chris Jacquemain. He's now a senior, with much promise left unfulfilled, but coach J.D. Brookhart made sure he invested in Jacquemain's potential for a breakout final season.

Quarterbacks coach Walt Harris was hired as a lead tutor to support Montgomery and to further the offense.

It likely will be a quick hook if Jacquemain stumbles. Matt Rodgers, a heralded sophomore, appears to be game-ready.

Senior running back Alex Allen gets a chance to carry the load with Dennis Kennedy out of the picture. Allen was hobbled in spring practices after playing just three games last season because of hip surgery. He averaged 4.8 yards per carry when healthy.

He'll have plenty of competition, especially if Louisville transfer Dale Martin, who also missed spring camp, can get out of the trainer's room (Achilles').

Wide receiver Deryn Bowser made an immediate impact as a junior college transfer in 2008, leading the team with 64 catches for 785 yards (12.3 per catch). He and Andre Jones (47 catches for 678 yards and seven touchdowns) got minimal work in the new offense because of minor injuries in the spring.

DEFENSE

Akron needed a clean slate on defense. The Zips allowed 31.3 points and 187.2 rushing yards per game in 2008.

The new faces are many, but Akron's secondary should anchor the team behind potential star defensive end Almondo Sewell and Iowa transfer Ryan Bain.

Bain missed last season amid injury problems and NCAA sanctions. Junior newcomer Phil Tonga, a product of the same junior college that produced receiver Deryn Bowser, is in contention for a starting spot.

Linebacker Mike Thomas was second on the team in tackles in 2008. He had 81 stops and a team-high 8.5 tackles for losses and two forced fumbles. He's smaller than most running backs he collides with, but Thomas can run and earns consistent praise for his instincts and intelligence.

Thomas will welcome a hefty contribution at linebacker from offseason star Aaron Williams, who played in 10 games last season but really looked ready for takeoff in spring camp.

Cornerback Miguel Graham, a junior college transfer, has played a lot of football, although he isn't entirely tested as a starter. He has All-MAC ability, leading the Zips in picks (three) and finishing with 70 tackles a year ago.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicker Igor Iveljic and punter John Stec are back as starters. Stec averaged 37.1 yards per punt in 2008. Iveljic, who wasn't used on most kickoffs, missed four of his 13 tries between 20-29 yards, but was 5 of 6 from 30-39.

One of the biggest voids to fill is returner Bryan Williams. He averaged 29 yards per kickoff return in '08.

OVERVIEW

The Zips open their new stadium with Brookhart's job on the line, and they could easily close the book on his tenure in Akron if he doesn't finish in the hunt for a division title, something the program hasn't contended for since taking the 2005 crown.

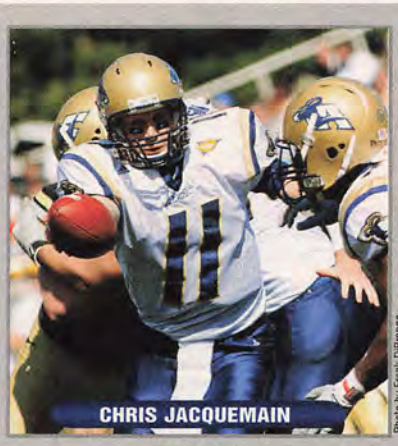

CHRIS JACQUEMAIN

Photo by Frank DiBrango

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Chris Jacquemain***	**6-2**	**215**	**Sr.**
	Matt Rodgers	6-2	205	So.
RB	Alex Allen	6-0	205	Sr.
	Joe Tuzze	5-11	220	Sr.
WR	**Andre Jones***	**5-11**	**180**	**Sr.**
	Richard Sandilands	6-0	190	Jr.
WR	**Jeremy Bruce***	**5-9**	**195**	**Sr.**
	Dashan Miller*	**6-1**	**200**	**Sr.**
WR	**Deryn Bowser***	**6-1**	**210**	**Sr.**
	Nadir Brown	6-5	200	Fr.
TE	Rhyne Ladrach	6-6	240	Fr.
	Andrew Colosimo	6-5	275	Fr.
LT	**Corey Woods***	**6-5**	**305**	**Jr.**
	Casey Estrada	6-4	295	Sr.
LG	**Mike Ward***	**6-3**	**310**	**Jr.**
	Zac Kasparek	6-5	315	So.
C	**Elliott Bates***	**6-3**	**295**	**Sr.**
	Dan Ronsman	6-4	290	So.
RG	**Zack Anderson***	**6-4**	**310**	**Sr.**
	Paul Simkovich	6-3	295	So.
RT	Jake Anderson	6-5	305	So.
	Jason Sekinger	6-9	335	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DT	**Almondo Sewell***	**6-1**	**280**	**Jr.**
	Marquinn Davis	6-6	290	So.
NT	Ryan Bain	6-2	290	Sr.
	Dan Marcoux	6-3	275	So.
DE	Joe Rash	6-2	275	So.
	Hasan Hazime	6-5	255	So.
LB	Aaron Williams	6-0	205	So.
	Amin Kabir	6-1	205	Sr.
LB	Sean Fobbs	6-1	240	Jr.
	Al-Teric Balaam	6-0	245	Sr.
BAN	**Mike Thomas***	**5-10**	**215**	**Jr.**
	Matt Little	6-2	230	So.
ROV	Troy Gilmer	6-1	215	Fr.
	Shawn Lemon*	**6-1**	**235**	**Jr.**
CB	Manley Waller	5-8	160	So.
	Dante Barnes	6-1	190	Jr.
CB	**Miguel Graham***	**5-9**	**170**	**Sr.**
	Marvase Byrd	5-8	170	Fr.
SS	**Jalil Carter***	**6-1**	**190**	**Jr.**
	Tyler Campbell	5-11	190	Jr.
FS	**Wayne Cobham***	**6-2**	**200**	**Sr.**
	Kevn Davis	6-1	205	Jr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Igor Iveljic***	**6-0**	**190**	**Jr.**
P	**John Stec***	**5-8**	**190**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	at Penn State
Sept. 12	MORGAN STATE
Sept. 19	INDIANA
Sept. 26	at Central Michigan
Oct. 10	OHIO
Oct. 17	at Buffalo
Oct. 24	at Syracuse
Oct. 31	at Northern Illinois
Nov. 7	KENT STATE
Nov. 13	TEMPLE
Nov. 20	at Bowling Green
Nov. 27	EASTERN MICHIGAN

2008 Results

(5-7, 3-5)

L	at Wisconsin	17-38
W	at Syracuse	42-28
L	BALL STATE	24-41
W	at Army	22-3
L	CINCINNATI	15-17
W	at Kent State (OT)	30-27
L	BOWLING GREEN	33-37
W	at Eastern Michigan	42-35
W	TOLEDO	47-30
L	BUFFALO (OT)	40-43
L	at Ohio	42-49
L	at Temple	6-27

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	30.0	36
Rushing	165.2	45
Passing	231.5	46
Total	396.7	40
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	31.3	95
Rushing	187.2	100
Passing	210.4	61
Total	397.6	90
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 6	+ 0.50	28

MIAMI (OHIO) REDHAWKS

NATIONAL RANK 115

MAC rank: 12 | Record: 2-10 | MAC record: 1-7 (7th, East) | Stadium: Yager Stadium (24,286)

RedHawks in A Box

COACH: Michael Haywood — At Miami University and overall: 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Peter Vaas
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Carl "Bull" Reese
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2003
LAST BOWL: 2004, Independence
RETURNING STARTERS: 13; 8 offense; 5 defense
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Daniel Raudabaugh, WR Dustin Woods, LB Caleb Bostic, DB Wendell Brunson, DL Mark Paun
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The coaching staff should be a boon to a program that fell out of relevance in the MAC last season. With that direction, Raudabaugh and the offense should make a sizeable jump.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The defense was filleted by graduation losses and cannot get by on guts alone. Underclassmen could get a lot of time immediately, which could hinder the performance of the experienced players, who might be passed over for the development of younger options — and the program.

OFFENSE

The RedHawks are hitching their wagon to Daniel Raudabaugh at quarterback.

He adapted to the pro-style offense of Peter Vaas in the spring, but much of the onus on gameday falls on the quarterback to direct skill players to exploit mismatches regardless of the personnel grouping.

Raudabaugh, who had eight touchdowns and nine interceptions last season, could have a short run as the starter if his execution isn't up to new head coach Michael Haywood's standards.

Still, the hope is Raudabaugh will blossom after his big spring. He didn't take senseless risks in public scrimmages and connected on 11 of 14 pass attempts in the spring game.

His favorite target in the offseason was wide receiver Chris Givens, who had nine receptions for 110 yards and two touchdowns in the spring game. He's physical and can overpower most defensive backs in the conference, including in run blocking.

Haywood, whose last stop was as the offensive coordinator at Notre Dame, has stressed that the program needs elusive playmakers in the backfield, but he's making pass protection a must before setting a depth chart.

Junior Thomas Merriweather (140 carries, 547 yards, four TDs in '08) is the top returning rusher.

DEFENSE

Miami allowed 32.7 points per game in 2008 and the defense is expected to make major strides in terms of personnel and talent. For now, though, the new coaching staff will make the most of what it has to work with in a transition season.

Carl "Bull" Reese came out of retirement to coordinate what is sure to be an innovative defense. Reese's trademark at Texas (1998-2003) and LSU before that was to play his best 11 with no adherence to traditional 4-3 or 3-4 fronts — a 2-3-6 isn't out of the question against a bevy of spread offenses in the conference.

There's furious competition at linebacker, which should run into fall drills, with as many as five players in the running to take over for a pair of All-MAC linebackers — Joey Hudson and Clayton Mullins. They were the RedHawks' top two tacklers last season with a combined 214 stops

The top four tacklers on the team are gone. Caleb Bostic, a senior linebacker, can be a weapon because of his combination of size and speed.

Defensive lineman Martin Channels gives Miami a big run stopper, but he and end Morris Council have a new band of running mates on the D-line.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Miami paid special attention to these units in the spring. Beyond the loss of kicker Nate Parseghian and punter Jake Richardson, Haywood wants to clean up mistakes that lead to poor field position and scoring chances for the other teams.

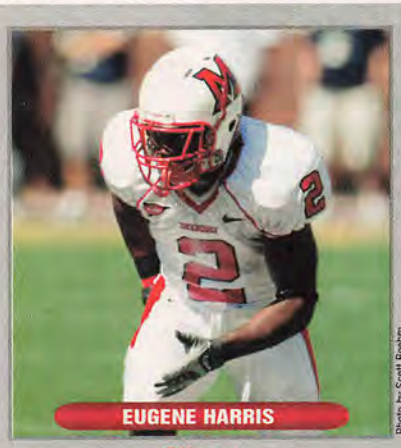
He'll put his best athletes on the field and won't dismiss the importance of special teams over a key role on offense or defense.

Eugene Harris nailed down the punt-return job last season, but most other spots remain up in the air.

OVERVIEW

There's plenty to like about Haywood, a protege of many successful coaches — Nick Saban, Mack Brown and Charlie Weis. His coaching staff is steeped in big-game experience.

It's unlikely Miami will jump from last-to-first — or even upper-middle — this season, but Haywood likely will prove to be an effective recruiter, so this is a MAC program worth watching.



EUGENE HARRIS

Photo by Scott Boehm

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Daniel Raudabaugh***	**6-4**	**229**	**Sr.**
	Zac Dysert	6-4	216	Fr.
TB	**Thomas Merriweather***	**5-10**	**203**	**Jr.**
	Andre Bratton	5-11	181	Sr.
HB	Andy Cruse	6-4	214	Fr.
	Armand Robinson	6-1	202	Jr.
WR	Jamal Rogers	5-11	168	Jr.
	Dustin Woods*	**5-11**	**197**	**Sr.**
WR	**Chris Givens***	**6-2**	**205**	**Jr.**
	Eugene Harris*	**5-10**	**183**	**Jr.**
WR	Kendrick Bruton	6-4	258	So.
	Rob Reiland	6-3	237	So.
LT	**Brandon Brooks***	**6-5**	**315**	**So.**
	Lee Zamos	6-5	285	So.
LG	Sean Redwine	6-4	278	Jr.
	Bob Gulley*	**6-4**	**305**	**Jr.**
C	Brad Bednar	6-4	264	Fr.
	Nick Kemper	6-3	274	Fr.
RG	**Nate Williams***	**6-5**	**307**	**Jr.**
	Andrew Phelan	6-4	314	Fr.
RT	Ken Staudinger	6-5	273	So.
	Matt Kennedy	6-5	244	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Mike Johns	6-4	270	Fr.
	Jordan Stevens	6-4	262	Jr.
DT	**Martin Channels***	**6-0**	**325**	**Sr.**
	Mark Paun	6-3	277	Sr.
DT	Jordain Brown	6-0	294	So.
	DJ Svabik	6-6	278	Jr.
DE	Morris Council	6-2	259	Jr.
	Evan Klepec	6-4	243	Fr.
LB	**Caleb Bostic***	**6-3**	**232**	**Sr.**
	Luke Kelly	6-2	211	Fr.
LB	Jerrell Wedge	5-9	227	So.
	Ryan Kennedy	6-1	224	Jr.
LB	David Davis	6-1	223	Jr.
	DeAndre Gilmore	6-1	227	Jr.
CB	**Brandon Stephens***	**5-10**	**200**	**Jr.**
	D.J. Brown	6-1	170	Fr.
CB	**Jeff Thompson***	**5-10**	**196**	**Sr.**
	Wendell Brunson	5-11	196	Sr.
S	Jordan Gafford	6-0	206	Jr.
	Peris Edwards	6-1	200	Jr.
S	**Ben Bennett***	**5-11**	**195**	**Jr.**
	Anthony Kokal	6-0	201	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Trevor Cook	6-2	189	Jr.
P	Chris DiCesare	6-2	220	Sr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	vs. Kentucky (Cincinnati, OH)
Sept. 12	at Boise State
Sept. 19	at Western Michigan
Sept. 26	at Kent State
Oct. 3	CINCINNATI
Oct. 10	at Northwestern
Oct. 17	at Ohio
Oct. 24	NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Oct. 31	TOLEDO
Nov. 5	at Temple
Nov. 12	BOWLING GREEN
Nov. 18	BUFFALO

2008 Results

(2-10, 1-7)

L	VANDERBILT	13-34
L	at Michigan	6-16
W	CHARLESTON SOUTHERN	38-27
L	at Cincinnati	20-45
L	TEMPLE	10-28
L	at Northern Illinois	13-17
W	at Bowling Green	27-20
L	KENT STATE	21-54
L	at Buffalo	17-37
L	BALL STATE	16-31
L	at Toledo	14-42
L	OHIO	26-41

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	18.4	107
Rushing	108.1	101
Passing	217.9	57
Total	326.0	89
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	32.7	101
Rushing	208.3	106
Passing	187.2	28
Total	395.5	88
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 12	- 1.00	110

EASTERN MICHIGAN EAGLES

NATIONAL RANK 116

MAC rank: 13 | Record: 3-9 | MAC record: 2-6 (T-5th, West) | Stadium: Rynearson Stadium (30,200)

Eagles in A Box

COACH: Ron English — At Eastern Michigan and overall, 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ken Karcher
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Eric Lewis
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1987
LAST BOWL: 1987, California Bowl
RETURNING STARTERS: 18; 8 offense, 8 defense, punter, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Andy Schmitt, RB Terrence Blevins, WR Jacory Stone, C Eric Davis, DE Brad Ohrman, S Ryan Downard, P Zach Johnson, PK Joe Carithers
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Eagles have a good quarterback in Andy Schmitt and a solid receiving crew. This is a team that scored 108 points in its final two games. The special teams have Ray Guy Award nominee Zach Johnson and PK Joe Carithers, who is also solid.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Like many MAC teams, Eastern Michigan has a lot more questions than answers on defense. The Eagles gave up a MAC-worst 427 points a year ago. Non-conference games at Michigan, Northwestern, Arkansas will be tough.

OFFENSE

New coach Ron English is under no illusions about the tough rebuilding task, but he does have a fine quarterback in Andy Schmitt, who can help the team stay competitive.

Schmitt, 6-4, 238 pounds, has the size and strength to hang in the pocket and shake off tacklers as his receivers get open. He'll be directing English's pro-style offense and should have a prolific season.

Remember, this is a guy who completed an NCAA record 58 passes in 80 attempts — for 516 yards and five touchdowns — in a season-ending victory over Central Michigan.

For the season, Schmitt completed 261 of 417 passes for 2,644 yards with 15 touchdowns a year ago. He also ran for 171 yards and found the end zone five times.

Schmitt is joined by senior running back Terrence Blevins, who rushed for 575 yards and 12 touchdowns a year ago. Blevins got plenty of support from backup Dwayne Priest, who added 474 yards and five touchdowns. Blevins has the kind of moves and breakaway ability to cause headaches for the defense.

Schmitt's top returning receiver is Jacory Stone, who caught 88 passes for 943 yards and three touchdowns as a junior. Tight end Josh LeDuc showed plenty of improvement last year after catching 32 passes for 446 yards and four touchdowns. He figures to play a prominent role.

The line returns four starters, and the best of the bunch may be center Eric Davis, who is athletic and tough.

DEFENSE

The defense can't be expected to turn things around overnight after giving up 427 points a year ago.

English will be looking for the team to assert itself in big moments. If it can do that and the offense produces, the Eagles might be able to add two or three more wins.

Sophomore end Brad Ohrman made a big impression as a freshman with 42 tackles, including 11 for loss and six sacks. Defensive lineman Brandon Downs could become an important factor because of his quickness. He had 30 tackles, including 2.5 for loss last year, and should improve on both figures.

Jermaine Jenkins is the key to the linebacking crew. He had 64 tackles, with seven for loss and two sacks, as well as two interceptions. Jenkins moves well and is a relatively good hitter but can also show some improvement as a tackler.

Safety Ryan Downard had 28 tackles, two interceptions and two passes defensed last year.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The special teams should be in decent shape. Placekicker Joe Carithers returns after making 10 of 14 field goal attempts a year ago. Zach Johnson is a Ray Guy Award candidate. The senior is hoping to bounce back after leg injuries held him back a year ago.

OVERVIEW

It will be about small steps for Ron English and the Eagles. He is taking over a program that went 3-9 a year ago and hasn't won a conference championship in 22 years.

English, a former defensive coordinator at Michigan, will try to build a solid defense, but that won't happen in one season. The offense could help the Eagles pull off some upsets while English tries to get things going on the other side of the ball and increase depth through his next recruiting class.

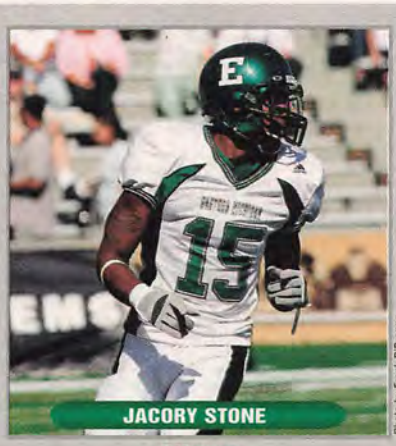

JACORY STONE

Photo by Frank DiBrango

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Andy Schmitt***	**6-4**	**238**	**Sr.**
	Kyle McMahon	6-3	208	Jr.
RB	**Terrence Blevins***	**6-1**	**238**	**Sr.**
	Dwayne Priest	5-9	186	Sr.
WR	**Jacory Stone***	**6-0**	**201**	**Sr.**
	Tyrone Burke	6-0	197	Jr.
WR	**Marvon Sanders***	**5-9**	**160**	**So.**
	Trey Hunter	6-0	207	So.
WR	DeAnthony White	5-8	170	Sr.
	David Fox	6-2	195	So.
TE	Josh LeDuc	6-3	230	Jr.
	John Bonner	6-2	240	Sr.
LT	**Bridger Buche***	**6-3**	**294**	**Jr.**
	Derek Gotham	6-4	290	So.
LG	**Andy Fretz***	**6-2**	**290**	**Sr.**
	Korey Neal	6-3	280	Fr.
C	**Eric Davis***	**6-2**	**280**	**Jr.**
	Brian Moore	6-6	290	Jr.
RG	**Stephen Johnson***	**6-4**	**280**	**Sr.**
	Drew Serruto	6-4	275	So.
RT	Dan DeMaster	6-5	290	Jr.
	Scott McLeod	6-8	297	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DL	**Brad Ohrman***	**6-4**	**244**	**So.**
	Ryan Kuhlman	6-4	265	So.
DL	**Brandon Downs***	**6-1**	**246**	**Sr.**
	Kalvin Seilis	6-5	236	Fr.
DL	**Brandon Slater***	**6-3**	**273**	**So.**
	Javon Reese	6-2	230	So.
DL	**Tyler Palsrok***	**6-4**	**265**	**Jr.**
	Zachary Allen	6-2	240	Fr.
LB	**Jermaine Jenkins***	**6-2**	**207**	**Sr.**
	Herb Waits	5-10	184	So.
LB	**Andre Hatchett***	**5-11**	**221**	**So.**
	Tim Fort	6-0	214	Jr.
LB	Marcus English	6-1	216	So.
	Steve Brown	6-0	220	So.
CB	**Arrington Hicks***	**5-10**	**170**	**Jr.**
	Nate Wilson	5-11	180	So.
CB	Derrick Hunter	5-11	182	Jr.
	Mark Mitchell	5-11	179	Jr.
SS	**Ryan Downard***	**6-1**	**201**	**Jr.**
	Kevin Long	6-1	196	Jr.
FS	Chris May	5-10	200	Sr.
	Brandon Pratt	6-2	197	Jr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Joe Carithers***	**6-0**	**200**	**Jr.**
P	**Zach Johnson***	**6-0**	**195**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	ARMY
Sept. 12	at Northwestern
Sept. 19	at Michigan
Oct. 3	TEMPLE
Oct. 10	at Central Michigan
Oct. 17	KENT STATE
Oct. 24	BALL STATE
Oct. 31	at Arkansas
Nov. 5	at Northern Illinois
Nov. 14	WESTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 20	at Toledo
Nov. 27	at Akron

2008 Results

(3-9, 2-6)

W	INDIANA STATE	52-0
L	at Michigan State	10-42
L	TOLEDO	17-41
L	at Maryland	24-51
L	NORTHERN ILLINOIS	0-37
W	at Bowling Green	24-21
L	at Army	13-17
L	AKRON	35-42
L	at Ball State	16-38
L	at Western Michigan	10-31
L	at Temple	52-55
W	CENTRAL MICHIGAN	56-52

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.8	56
Rushing	148.2	57
Passing	269.3	20
Total	417.5	25
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	35.6	109
Rushing	196.3	103
Passing	212.3	65
Total	408.6	95
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 1	+ 0.08	55

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

PASSING EFFICIENCY	GM	PATT	COMP	PCT	INT	YDS	TDS	EFFIC.
1. Sam Bradford, Oklahoma	14	483	328	67.91	8	4720	50	180.8
2. David Johnson, Tulsa	14	400	258	64.50	18	4059	46	178.7
3. Colt McCoy, Texas	13	433	332	76.67	8	3859	34	173.8
4. Tim Tebow, Florida	14	298	192	64.43	4	2746	30	172.4
5. Zac Robinson, Oklahoma State	13	314	204	64.97	10	3064	25	166.8
6. Mark Sanchez, USC	13	366	241	65.85	10	3207	34	164.6
7. Chase Clement, Rice	13	490	326	66.53	7	4119	44	163.9
8. Graham Harrell, Texas Tech	13	626	442	70.61	9	5111	45	160.0
9. Case Keenum, Houston	13	589	397	67.40	11	5020	44	159.9
10. Chase Daniel, Missouri	14	528	385	72.92	18	4335	39	159.4

INTERCEPTIONS	GM	INT	YDS	TDS	INT/GM
1. Eric Berry, Tennessee	12	7	265	2	.58
1. Kevin Sanders, UAB	12	7	55	0	.58
3. Trimane Goddard, North Carolina	13	7	156	1	.54
3. Darcel McBath, Texas Tech	13	7	97	2	.54
3. Morgan Burnett, Georgia Tech	13	7	95	1	.54
3. Alphonso Smith, Wake Forest	13	7	33	0	.54
7. Ahmad Black, Florida	14	7	191	2	.50
7. Joe Pawelek, Baylor	12	6	56	0	.50
7. Brian Lainhart, Kent State	12	6	42	0	.50
7. Woodny Turenne, Louisville	10	5	3	0	.50

RUSHING	GM	ATT	YDS	TDS	AVG	AVG/G
1. Donald Brown, Connecticut	13	367	2083	18	5.68	160.23
2. Shonn Greene, Iowa	13	307	1850	20	6.03	142.31
3. Jahvid Best, California	12	194	1580	15	8.14	131.67
4. Javon Ringer, Michigan State	13	390	1637	22	4.20	125.92
5. MiQuale Lewis, Ball State	14	322	1736	22	5.39	124.00
6. Chris Wells, Ohio State	10	207	1197	8	5.78	119.70
7. Kendall Hunter, Oklahoma State	13	241	1555	16	6.45	119.62
8. Vai Taua, Nevada	13	236	1521	15	6.44	117.00
9. Tyrell Fenroy, Louisiana-Lafayette	12	226	1375	19	6.08	114.58
10. LeSean McCoy, Pittsburgh	13	308	1488	21	4.83	114.46

SCORING	GM	TDS	XP	XPA	FG	FGA	POINTS	PTPG
1. Javon Ringer, Michigan State	13	22	0	0	0	0	132	10.15
2. LeSean McCoy, Pittsburgh	13	21	0	0	0	0	126	9.69
2. Dez Bryant, Oklahoma State	13	21	0	0	0	0	126	9.69
4. Graham Gano, Florida State	11	0	33	34	24	26	105	9.55
5. Tyrell Fenroy, Louisiana-Lafayette	12	19	0	0	0	0	114	9.50
5. Jeff Wolfert, Missouri	14	0	73	73	20	27	133	9.50
7. MiQuale Lewis, Ball State	14	22	0	0	0	0	132	9.43
8. Louie Sakoda, Utah	13	0	56	57	22	24	122	9.38
9. Jarett Dillard, Rice	13	20	0	0	0	0	120	9.23
9. Kevin Kelly, Penn State	13	0	60	60	20	24	120	9.23
9. Shonn Greene, Iowa	13	20	0	0	0	0	120	9.23

TOTAL OFFENSE	GM	RUSH	NET	PYDS	TOT	YDS/G
1. Case Keenum, Houston	13	76	221	5020	5241	403.2
2. Graham Harrell, Texas Tech	13	41	-15	5111	5096	392.0
3. Chase Clement, Rice	13	154	693	4119	4812	370.2
4. Sam Bradford, Oklahoma	14	42	47	4720	4767	340.5
5. Colt McCoy, Texas	13	136	561	3859	4420	340.0
6. Chase Daniel, Missouri	14	69	281	4335	4616	329.7
7. Juice Williams, Illinois	12	175	719	3173	3892	324.3
8. Todd Reesing, Kansas	13	126	224	3888	4112	316.3
9. Max Hall, BYU	13	65	115	3957	4072	313.2
10. Dan LeFevour, Central Mich.	11	168	592	2784	3376	306.9

PUNTING	GM	PUNT	YDS	AVG
1. T.J. Conley, Idaho	12	58	2751	47.43
2. Ross Thevenot, Tulane	12	45	2061	45.80
3. Justin Brantly, Texas A&M	12	51	2331	45.71
4. Jacob Richardson, Miami (Ohio)	12	52	2360	45.38
5. Tim Masthay, Kentucky	13	53	2397	45.23
6. Aaron Perez, UCLA	12	79	3571	45.20
7. Kevin Huber, Cincinnati	14	60	2697	44.95
8. Pat McAfee, West Virginia	13	62	2772	44.71
9. Derek Epperson, Baylor	12	49	2169	44.27
10. Anthony Hartz, Colorado State	11	44	1940	44.09

RECEIVING	GM	REC.	YDS	TD	AVG/G
1. Austin Collie, BYU	13	106	1538	15	118.31
2. Kenny Britt, Rutgers	12	87	1371	7	114.25
3. Dez Bryant, Oklahoma State	13	87	1480	19	113.85
4. Dezmon Briscoe, Kansas	13	92	1407	15	108.23
5. Chris Williams, New Mexico State	12	86	1271	9	105.92
6. Aldrick Robinson, SMU	10	59	1047	11	104.70
7. James Casey, Rice	13	111	1329	13	102.23
8. Jarett Dillard, Rice	13	87	1310	20	100.77
9. Naaman Roosevelt, Buffalo	14	104	1402	13	100.14
10. Jamarko Simmons, Western Mich.	13	104	1276	7	98.15

TEAM STATISTICS

TOTAL OFFENSE	GM	PLAYS	YDS	AVG	TD	AVG/G
1. Tulsa	14	1097	7978	7.27	90	569.86
2. Houston	13	1016	7316	7.20	71	562.77
3. Oklahoma	14	1106	7670	6.93	99	547.86
4. Texas Tech	13	979	6903	7.05	79	531.00
5. Nevada	13	1011	6611	6.54	64	508.54
6. Oklahoma State	13	908	6340	6.98	69	487.69
7. Oregon	13	959	6303	6.57	71	484.85
8. Missouri	14	982	6778	6.90	76	484.14
9. Texas	13	955	6185	6.48	74	475.77
10. Rice	13	965	6122	6.34	74	470.92

TOTAL DEFENSE	GM	PLAYS	YDS	AVG	TDS	AVG/G
1. TCU	13	739	2831	3.83	18	217.77
2. USC	13	798	2883	3.61	14	221.77
3. Alabama	14	858	3689	4.30	25	263.50
3. Tennessee	12	776	3162	4.07	20	263.50
5. Boston College	14	889	3754	4.22	31	268.14
6. Connecticut	13	791	3614	4.57	30	278.00
7. Virginia Tech	14	794	3912	4.93	27	279.43
8. Penn State	13	829	3641	4.39	22	280.08
9. Florida	14	896	3994	4.46	21	285.29
10. South Florida	13	814	3739	4.59	31	287.62

KICKOFF RETURNS	GM	RET	YDS	TDS	AVG
1. Temple	12	47	1250	2	26.60
2. USC	13	23	610	1	26.52
3. Kentucky	13	44	1161	2	26.39
4. TCU	13	32	823	1	25.72
5. Oklahoma	14	52	1301	0	25.02
6. New Mexico	12	36	898	0	24.94
7. UCF	12	47	1172	2	24.94
8. Tulsa	14	64	1577	1	24.64
9. BYU	13	53	1304	0	24.60
10. Penn State	13	37	908	2	24.54

SCORING OFFENSE	GM	TDS	XP	2XP	FG	SF	PTS	AVG
1. Oklahoma	14	99	94	0	8	1	716	51.14
2. Tulsa	14	90	86	1	11	0	661	47.21
3. Texas Tech	13	79	70	1	7	1	569	43.77
4. Florida	14	82	81	0	12	1	611	43.64
5. Texas	13	74	72	1	11	0	551	42.38
6. Missouri	14	76	73	0	20	1	591	42.21
7. Oregon	13	71	63	1	18	0	545	41.92
8. Rice	13	74	73	1	6	0	537	41.31
9. Oklahoma State	13	69	65	2	15	1	530	40.77
10. Houston	13	71	62	2	12	0	528	40.62

SCORING DEFENSE	GM	TDS	KXP	OXP	FG	SF	PT	PT/G
1. USC	13	14	12	0	7	0	117	9.0
2. TCU	13	18	18	0	7	0	147	11.3
3. Boise State	13	21	17	0	7	0	164	12.6
4. Florida	14	21	17	0	12	1	181	12.9
5. Iowa	13	17	14	0	17	1	169	13.0
6. Ohio State	13	21	20	1	11	0	181	13.9
7. Alabama	14	25	23	0	9	0	200	14.3
8. Penn State	13	22	20	1	11	0	187	14.4
9. Virginia Tech	14	27	23	1	15	1	234	16.7
10. Tennessee	12	20	18	0	21	0	201	16.8

PUNT RETURNS	GM	RET	YDS	TDS	AVG
1. Central Michigan	13	20	410	1	20.50
2. Oklahoma State	13	20	368	2	18.40
3. Arizona	13	33	587	3	17.79
4. Georgia	13	24	422	1	17.58
5. Ball State	14	19	294	0	15.47
6. New Mexico	12	22	339	0	15.41
7. Arizona State	12	26	389	0	14.96
8. Alabama	14	49	701	4	14.31
9. Florida	14	42	592	2	14.10
10. Fresno State	13	25	350	3	14.00

RUSHING OFFENSE	GM	ATT	NET	AVG.	TDS	YDSPG
1. Navy	13	715	3801	5.32	32	292.38
2. Oregon	13	585	3641	6.22	47	280.08
3. Nevada	13	593	3611	6.09	39	277.77
4. Georgia Tech	13	640	3552	5.55	32	273.23
5. Tulsa	14	674	3752	5.57	40	268.00
6. Air Force	13	777	3470	4.47	27	266.92
7. Louisiana-Lafayette	12	533	3164	5.94	32	263.67
8. Oklahoma State	13	582	3191	5.48	38	245.46
9. Army	12	635	2897	4.56	17	241.42
10. Florida	14	545	3236	5.94	42	231.14

RUSHING DEFENSE	GM	ATT	NET	AVG	TDS	YDS/G
1. TCU	13	355	612	1.72	9	47.1
2. Alabama	14	391	1038	2.65	5	74.1
3. Texas	13	356	1086	3.05	8	83.5
4. Mississippi	13	411	1112	2.71	9	85.5
5. USC	13	416	1136	2.73	8	87.4
6. Nevada	13	377	1152	3.06	17	88.6
7. Boston College	14	454	1277	2.81	14	91.2
8. Penn State	13	430	1212	2.82	12	93.2
9. Iowa	13	397	1222	3.08	7	94.0
10. South Florida	13	436	1238	2.84	12	95.2

PUNTING	GM	NO	YDS	AVG	TB	RET	R/YDS	NET/P
1. Cincinnati	14	61	2717	44.54	3	18	127	41.48
2. West Virginia	13	62	2772	44.71	7	23	121	40.50
3. Texas	13	41	1798	43.85	5	11	74	39.61
4. Boise State	13	47	2095	44.57	7	18	95	39.57
5. Michigan	12	83	3490	42.05	3	21	165	39.34
6. Oklahoma State	13	37	1550	41.89	1	13	85	39.05
7. Baylor	12	50	2169	43.38	5	17	131	38.76
8. Florida	14	45	1952	43.38	8	14	78	38.09
9. Ohio State	13	60	2445	40.75	5	16	66	37.98
10. East Carolina	14	73	3207	43.93	13	26	183	37.86

PASS OFFENSE	GM	ATT	COM	INT	PCT	YDS	TDS	YDS/G
1. Texas Tech	13	662	465	10	70.24	5371	47	413.2
2. Houston	13	610	411	11	67.38	5221	45	401.6
3. Oklahoma	14	517	350	9	67.70	4891	51	349.4
4. Missouri	14	565	404	18	71.50	4625	41	330.4
5. Rice	13	516	339	7	65.70	4254	48	327.2
6. BYU	13	493	338	14	68.56	4035	35	310.4
7. Texas	13	447	343	8	76.73	4008	36	308.3
8. Kansas	13	500	333	13	66.60	3973	33	305.6
9. Tulsa	14	423	270	21	63.83	4226	47	301.9
10. New Mexico State	12	492	330	16	67.07	3616	25	301.3

PASSING DEFENSE	GM	ATT	COMP	PCT	INT	YDS	TD	YDS/G
1. USC	13	382	199	52.09	19	1747	6	134.38
2. South Carolina	13	328	189	57.62	14	2070	9	159.23
3. New Mexico State	12	300	176	58.67	9	1913	14	159.42
4. Tennessee	12	332	186	56.02	17	1925	8	160.42
5. Northern Ill.	13	338	208	61.54	6	2094	13	161.08
6. Florida State	13	342	175	51.17	9	2111	15	162.38
7. Miami (Florida)	13	336	172	51.19	4	2153	15	165.62
8. UCLA	12	332	177	53.31	11	2012	19	167.67
9. Connecticut	13	368	196	53.26	18	2187	9	168.23
10. San Jose State	12	356	187	52.53	16	2043	9	170.25

TURNOVERS	GM	+FUM	+INT	+TOT	-FUM	-INT	-TOT	-MAR
1. Oklahoma	14	15	19	34	2	9	11	1.64
2. Florida	14	9	26	35	8	5	13	1.57
3. Buffalo	14	25	8	33	8	6	14	1.36
4. Baylor	12	11	16	27	6	5	11	1.33
5. Wake Forest	13	19	18	37	13	7	20	1.31
6. Ohio State	13	14	15	29	7	6	13	1.23
7. Navy	13	14	16	30	10	5	15	1.15
7. California	13	10	24	34	9	10	19	1.15
7. Rice	13	15	16	31	9	7	16	1.15
10. Air Force	13	18	12	30	11	6	17	1.00

Improving and Expanding League Chasing Troy Again

The landscape and teams have changed drastically since the Sun Belt Conference formed in 2001.

However, there has been one constant since 2004 — Troy.

The Trojans, the defending league champions who joined the Sun Belt in 2004, have been a permanent fixture atop the league standings ... and 2009 figures to be no different.

Coming off an 8-5 season and a trip to the New Orleans Bowl, the Trojans are poised to make another run at a league championship.

They also have a luxury that few Sun Belt teams have — two proven winners at quarterback.

The Trojans lost starter Jamie Hampton to an ACL injury in the fifth game of last season. Levi Brown stepped in and threw for more than 2,000 yards and 15 touchdowns in the final eight games.

Although Troy suffered a hit on the offensive line — losing two starters to graduation — it has ample talent up front and an outstanding stable of skill players.

Better yet, the defense is again loaded and could be the key that leads the Trojans back to the New Orleans Bowl.

That being noted, Troy will have plenty of conference competition. Most teams return the bulk of their starting lineups in what should be an overall stronger year for the league.

Arkansas State certainly could challenge the Trojans, who visit the Red Wolves for a week-three showdown on Sept. 26.

ASU is loaded at the skill positions, led by senior quarterback Corey Leonard and senior tailback Reggie Arnold, who could become just the eighth back in NCAA history to rush for 1,000 yards in four straight seasons.

The Red Wolves also have a veteran defense and a line that is as dominant as any in the Sun Belt.

Florida Atlantic started 1-5 last season before winning six of its last seven games, including a 24-21 victory over Central Michigan in the Motor City Bowl.

The Owls probably lost more talent than any team in the league, but return enough to challenge Arkansas State and Troy. Senior quarterback Rusty Smith is a proven winner and has taken the Owls to two bowl games.

Troy, Arkansas State and Florida Atlantic might be the frontrunners, but Florida International, Middle Tennessee, Louisiana-Monroe and Louisiana-Lafayette also could get in the mix.

North Texas is coming off a one-win season, and Western Kentucky will officially join the league this year as the league's landscape changes again.

— Monte Hale

Sun Belt Conference Picks

	Good news	Bad news	Our call
1. Troy	Best talent in league on both sides of ball; proven winners at quarterback.	Lost two starters on offensive line; took a hit in the secondary to graduation.	Troy will be tested in conference play, but the Trojans are the clear pick.
2. Arkansas State	Red Wolves have outstanding and experienced skill players on offense.	Offensive line took some hits; conference road schedule is difficult.	This is Arkansas State's best shot in years to make a run at the league championship.
3. Florida Atlantic	Senior quarterback Rusty Smith is back, along with 11 other starters.	The Owls lost a lot of talent on both sides of the ball, particularly on defense.	It wouldn't be a surprise to see the Owls bowl eligible or atop the league standings.
4. Florida Int'l.	Coach Mario Cristobal has program on upswing; WR T.Y. Hilton could be a star.	Golden Panthers still trying to develop depth on both sides of the ball.	FIU might not be ready to win the league title, but they will have a say in who does.
5. Middle Tenn.	Nineteen starters return, including 10 on offense; roster back near 85 scholarship limit.	QB situation still somewhat iffy; Blue Raiders lack experienced depth in backfield.	The Blue Raiders are coming off a five-win season. They should match that and possibly get bowl eligible.
6. UL-Monroe	The Warhawks return 17 starters and a defense loaded with talent and speed.	ULM doesn't have an experienced quarterback, and the defensive line is thin.	If the Warhawks find a dependable quarterback, they'll finish higher in the league standings.
7. UL-Lafayette	Ragin' Cajuns return 17 starters, should have one of league's top defenses.	Lost three star offensive players who accounted for 44 touchdowns in 2008.	Too many question marks on offense to project a higher finish for the Ragin' Cajuns.
8. North Texas	Mean Green returns 18 starters; coach Todd Dodge's son, Riley, is ready at QB.	Could be the same ol' defense; UNT allowed 47.6 points a game last season.	UNT should improve on its one-win season, but there are too many gaping holes.
9. Western Kentucky	Hilltoppers are eligible to compete in football's highest level for the first time.	WKU didn't beat a FBS team last season and went 0-5 against the Sun Belt.	The Hilltoppers are a good fit for the Sun Belt, but aren't ready to be an upper- echelon team.

Lindy's 2009 All-Sun Belt Team

OFFENSE - First Team

QB	Corey Leonard	Sr.	Arkansas State
RB	Reggie Arnold	Sr.	Arkansas State
RB	DuJuan Harris	Jr.	Troy
WR	Jerrel Jernigan	Jr.	Troy
WR	Cortez Gent	Sr.	FAU
TE	Jason Harmon	Sr.	FAU
C	Chris Fisher	Sr.	UL-Lafayette
OL	Brad Bustle	Sr.	UL-Lafayette
OL	Dominic Padrta	Sr.	Arkansas State
OL	Danny Franks	Sr.	Troy
OL	David Matlock	Sr.	FAU
AP	T.Y. Hilton	So.	FIU
PK	Josh Arauco	Sr.	Arkansas State

DEFENSE - First Team

DL	Alex Carrington	Sr.	Arkansas State
DL	Brandon Lang	Sr.	Troy
DL	Cameron Sheffield	Sr.	Troy
DL	Aaron Morgan	Sr.	UL-Monroe
LB	Boris Lee	Sr.	Troy
LB	Cardia Jackson	Sr.	UL-Monroe
LB	Bear Woods	Sr.	Troy
DB	Josh Thompson	Sr.	UL-Monroe
DB	Anthony Gaitor	Jr.	FIU
DB	Jeremy Kellem	Jr.	Middle Tennessee
DB	James Truxillo	Sr.	UL-Monroe
P	Carlos Munera	Sr.	FIU

OFFENSE - Second Team

QB	Rusty Smith	Sr.	FAU
RB	Cam Montgomery	Sr.	North Texas
RB	Phillip Tanner	Sr.	Middle Tennessee
WR	T.Y. Hilton	So.	FIU
WR	Anthony McCall	So.	UL-Monroe
TE	Jamari Grant	Sr.	FAU
C	Brad Serini	Jr.	FIU
OL	Jonathan Decoster	Jr.	UL-Lafayette
OL	Drew Hilton	Jr.	Arkansas State
OL	Lavoris Williams	Jr.	FAU
OL	Mark Fisher	Jr.	Middle Tennessee
AP	Desmond Gee	Sr.	Middle Tennessee
PK	Sam Glusman	Sr.	Troy

DEFENSE - Second Team

DL	Jamari Lattimore	Jr.	Middle Tennessee
DL	Josh Savidge	Sr.	FAU
DL	Jermaine Council	Sr.	FAU
DL	Khari Mays	Sr.	Arkansas State
LB	Antwyne Zanders	Sr.	UL-Lafayette
LB	Scott Bryant	Sr.	FIU
LB	Grant Fleming	Jr.	UL-Lafayette
DB	Tavious Polo	Jr.	FAU
DB	Alex Suber	Sr.	Middle Tennessee
DB	Gerren Blount	Sr.	UL-Lafayette
DB	M.D. Jennings	Jr.	Arkansas State
P	Scott Love	Sr.	UL-Monroe

THE BIG ONES

Sept. 5	Florida Atlantic at Nebraska
Sept. 12	Troy at Florida
Sept. 12	Arkansas State at Nebraska
Sept. 12	Memphis at Middle Tennessee
Sept. 26	Troy at Arkansas State
Oct. 3	Arkansas State at Iowa
Oct. 6	Middle Tennessee at Troy
Oct. 17	Mississippi State at Middle Tennessee
Nov. 14	Arkansas State at Florida Atlantic
Nov. 14	Troy at Arkansas
Nov. 21	UL-Monroe at UL-Lafayette
Nov. 21	Florida Atlantic at Troy
Nov. 21	Florida International at Florida
Nov. 28	Troy at UL-Lafayette
Dec. 5	Florida Atlantic at Florida International

Bowl Connection

Sun Belt Champion

New Orleans Bowl
vs. Conference USA

TOP 10 NFL TALENT

1. **Brandon Lang**	DE	Sr.	Troy	Great pass rusher, projected as a high draft pick.
2. **Alex Carrington**	DE	Sr.	Arkansas St.	Led Sun Belt with 19 tackles for losses, 10.5 sacks in '08.
3. **Josh Thompson**	DB	Sr.	UL-Monroe	Warhawks have a history of sending DBs to the NFL.
4. **Rusty Smith**	QB	Sr.	FAU	Slumped early last year; size, arm strength are intriguing.
5. **Cardia Jackson**	LB	Sr.	UL-Monroe	Led the Sun Belt in tackles and can fly to the football.
6. **Gerren Blount**	DB	Sr.	UL-Lafayette	Cajuns also have history of sending DBs to the NFL.
7. **Tavious Polo**	DB	Jr.	FAU	Didn't build on a great freshman season, but still talented.
8. **Cortez Gent**	WR	Sr.	FAU	Makes big plays at crucial times.
9. **Boris Lee**	LB	Sr.	Troy	Has been slowed by injuries, but is a great talent.
10. **Josh Jarboe**	WR	Fr.	Troy	Originally signed with Oklahoma; worth keeping an eye on.

Most Valuable Player	Offensive Player of the Year	Defensive Player of the Year	Newcomer of the Year
Corey Leonard QB, Arkansas State	DuJuan Harris RB, Troy	Alex Carrington DL, Arkansas State	Jason Bruce WR, Troy

HONOR ROLL

Most accurate passer	Levi Brown	Troy
Strongest Arm	Rusty Smith	Florida Atlantic
Best Scrambler	Corey Leonard	Arkansas State
Coolest in the Clutch	Rusty Smith	Florida Atlantic
Toughest to Bring Down	Reggie Arnold, RB	Arkansas State
Best Hands	Jason Harmon, TE	Florida Atlantic
Most Dangerous Deep Threat	Cortez Gent, WR	Florida Atlantic
Best Pass Blocker	David Matlock, OG	Florida Atlantic
Best Run Blocker	Chris Fisher, C	UL-Lafayette
Best Pass Rusher	Alex Carrington, DE	Arkansas State
Best Cover Corner	Anthony Gaitor	Florida International
Special Teams Demon	T.Y. Hilton	Florida International

TROY TROJANS

NATIONAL RANK 83

Sun Belt rank: 1st | Record: 8-5 | Sun Belt record: 6-1 (1st) | Stadium: Movie Gallery Stadium (30,000)

Trojans in A Box

COACH: Larry Blakeney — At Troy and overall: 144-73-1, 18 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Neil Brown
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jeremy Rowell
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2008
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 8 offense, 5 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Levi Brown, RB DuJuan Harris, WR Jerrel Jernigan, DL Brandon Lang, DE Cameron Sheffield, LB Boris Lee, LB Bear Woods, CB/PR Jorrick Calvin
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Troy finished 27th nationally in total offense last season and should approach those numbers with a star-studded cast of skill players. Lang, Sheffield, Lee and Woods are four of the top defenders in the Sun Belt. Kicker Sam Glusman and return man Calvin are special team stars.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Trojans lost their top two offensive tackles and must find capable replacements. The losses on defense include two all-league first-team players (free safety Sherrod Martin and nickel back Terence Moore) and two second-team players (strong safety Tavares Williams and defensive tackle Dion Gales).

OFFENSE

It pays to be prepared. Just ask quarterback Levi Brown, who led Troy to a 5-3 record after taking over following a knee injury to starter Jamie Hampton.

Brown was the Sun Belt Conference Newcomer of the Year after passing for 2,030 yards and 15 touchdowns, with just 3 interceptions. He also set school records for most completions (40) and passing yards (391) in a game during a 45-17 victory over North Texas.

Brown remains No. 1 on the depth chart after an excellent spring. Hampton might redshirt.

Joining Brown as the elite players on the offense are speedy DuJuan Harris and Jerrel Jernigan, a dynamic open-field runner.

Harris rushed for a team-high 1,077 yards and 11 touchdowns a year ago, also adding 36 receptions. Maurice Greer, a bigger back at 224 pounds, will be his backup.

Jernigan hauled in 77 passes for 868 yards and 5 touchdowns last season despite nagging injuries. He might not be known to many outside of the Sun Belt, but coach Larry Blakeney said he "wouldn't trade him for any receiver in the country."

Although Troy lost both starting tackles, the interior line returns intact. Danny Franks, Steven Adams and former walk-on Tyler Clark will man the three inside spots. Nic Riley will take over at right tackle and junior college transfer James Brown will step in at left tackle.

DEFENSE

The Trojans led the conference last season in pass efficiency defense, pass defense, interceptions, scoring defense, total defense, sacks and turnovers gained.

Troy did lose six starters, but there is plenty of talent remaining, especially among the front seven.

Senior end Brandon Lang led the team with 10.5 sacks. Senior Cameron Sheffield returns at the other end.

The Trojans lost both starters at tackle, but seniors Kevin Dixon and Rashad Roussell performed well in the spring to earn starting jobs.

The linebacker position will once again be in great shape with the return of seniors Boris Lee and Bear Woods. Lee, a potential NFL Draft pick, led the team with 126 tackles.

Woods, who played through numerous injuries, finished second on the team with 108 tackles. Sophomore backups Xavier Lamb and Donnell Golden had excellent springs.

Senior David McDowell will fill in at nickel back. He was a standout during spring practice and gives the Trojans a physical presence in the box.

Senior Jorrick Calvin is the team's lone returning starter in the secondary but a lot of experience returns, mitigating a big drop-off in execution.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Troy, as usual, will have one of the best special team units in the Sun Belt, and perhaps even the country. Lou Groza semifinalist Sam Glusman connected on 20 of 29 field goals as a junior. Sophomore Will Goggans will handle the punting.

Jorrick Calvin will be the primary kick and punt returner. DuJuan Harris and Jerrel Jernigan could also see return duty at times.

OVERVIEW

The Trojans often produce some of the nation's most underrated defensive talent and this year should be no exception because of end Brandon Lang and linebacker Boris Lee. Although Troy has some holes to fill, there is enough talent and experience on both sides of the ball for the Trojans to claim their second straight Sun Belt title.

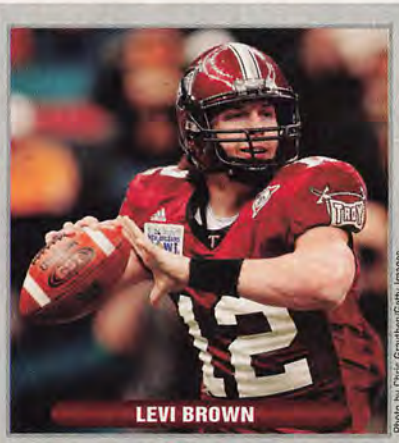

LEVI BROWN

Photo by Chris Graythen/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Levi Brown***	**6-4**	**225**	**Sr.**
	Tanner Jones	6-0	195	Jr.
RB	**DuJuan Harris***	**5-7**	**190**	**Jr.**
	Maurice Greer	5-11	224	Sr.
WR	**Cornelius Williams***	**6-0**	**190**	**Sr.**
	Austin Silvoy	6-2	190	Jr.
WR	**Jerrel Jernigan***	**5-9**	**176**	**Jr.**
	Zack Marcum	5-9	174	Sr.
WR	Andrew Davis	5-9	183	Sr.
	Patrick Cherry	5-11	186	Sr.
TE	**Travis Boyd***	**6-3**	**237**	**Sr.**
	Matt Stidham	6-3	234	So.
RT	Nic Riley	6-4	282	Sr.
	Kyle Wilborn	6-5	280	Fr.
RG	**Steven Adams***	**6-3**	**306**	**Sr.**
	Micah Grimes	6-4	288	So.
C	**Danny Franks***	**6-3**	**290**	**Sr.**
	Jimmie Arnold	6-2	290	Fr.
LG	**Tyler Clark***	**6-2**	**275**	**Jr.**
	Tyrell Curtis	6-3	302	Sr.
LT	James Brown	6-5	350	Jr.
	Ray Carter	6-3	290	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Brandon Lang***	**6-4**	**249**	**Sr.**
	Mario Addison	6-2	238	Jr.
DT	Kevin Dixon	6-3	285	Sr.
	James Searcy	6-3	260	Fr.
DT	Rashad Roussell	6-2	255	Sr.
	Emmanuel Dudley	6-2	290	Jr.
DE	**Cameron Sheffield***	**6-2**	**237**	**Sr.**
	R.J. Roberts	6-2	216	So.
LB	**Bear Woods***	**6-0**	**228**	**Sr.**
	Donnell Golden	6-0	223	So.
LB	**Boris Lee***	**6-0**	**231**	**Sr.**
	Xavier Lamb	5-9	249	So.
NB	David McDowell	6-1	249	Sr.
	Johnny Thompson	6-1	210	Fr.
CB	KeJuan Phillips	5-10	180	So.
	DeMarcus Robertson	5-11	195	Jr.
CB	**Jorrick Calvin***	**5-10**	**181**	**Sr.**
	Bryan Willis	6-0	180	Fr.
SS	Courtland Fuller	5-11	197	Sr.
	Bryant McKissic	6-2	210	Jr.
FS	Chris Bowens	6-0	184	Sr.
	Daniel Sheffield	6-4	210	Jr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Sam Glusman***	**5-10**	**170**	**Sr.**
P	**Will Goggans***	**6-0**	**222**	**So.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 3	at Bowling Green
Sept. 12	at Florida
Sept. 19	UAB
Sept. 26	at Arkansas State
Oct. 6	MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Oct. 17	at Florida International
Oct. 24	NORTH TEXAS
Oct. 31	LOUISIANA-MONROE
Nov. 7	at Western Kentucky
Nov. 14	at Arkansas
Nov. 21	FLORIDA ATLANTIC
Nov. 28	at Louisiana-Lafayette

2008 Results

	(8-5, 6-1)	
W	at Middle Tennessee	31-17
W	ALCORN STATE	65-0
L	at Ohio State	10-28
L	at Oklahoma State	24-55
W	at Florida Atlantic	30-17
W	FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL	33-23
W	at North Texas	45-17
L	at Louisiana-Monroe	30-31
W	WESTERN KENTUCKY	17-7
L	at LSU	31-40
W	LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE	48-3
W	ARKANSAS STATE	35-9
	New Orleans Bowl	
L	vs. Southern Miss (OT)	27-30

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	32.8	26
Rushing	167.6	40
Passing	246.6	33
Total	414.2	27
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	21.3	34
Rushing	139.7	57
Passing	187.8	29
Total	327.5	34
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 6	+ 0.46	29

ARKANSAS STATE RED WOLVES

NATIONAL RANK 93

Sun Belt rank: 2 | Record: 6-6 | Sun Belt record: 4-3 (T-3rd) | Stadium: Indian Stadium (30,708)

Red Wolves in A Box

COACH: Steve Roberts — At Arkansas State: 37-47, 7 years; overall: 86-80-1, 15 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Doug Ruse
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kevin Corless
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2005
LAST BOWL: 2005, New Orleans
RETURNING STARTERS: 15, 6 offense, 8 defense, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Corey Leonard, RB Reggie Arnold, WR Jahbari McLennan, DE Alex Carrington, DB M.D. Jennings
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: ASU's ability to run the football with Arnold and Derek Lawson — as well as Leonard at quarterback — makes the offense very dangerous. Defensively, ASU does a great job shutting down the run.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: ASU lost some quality offensive linemen, so it must effectively rebuild the group. It faces a tough early stretch with a game at Nebraska, a home meeting with defending Sun Belt champion Troy, and a game at Iowa.

OFFENSE

Although ASU took some graduation hits on the line, the returning skill players make this an offense that might take a backseat to no one in the Sun Belt Conference.

The Red Wolves return six starters from an offense that averaged 27 points a game last season.

It starts with senior and three-year starting quarterback Corey Leonard, who is coming off an exceptional season. He threw for more than 2,300 yards and 16 touchdowns, while rushing for more than 500 yards and four touchdowns.

Senior Reggie Arnold is back after rushing for more than 1,000 yards for the third straight season. He'll try to become just the eighth tailback in NCAA history to rush for more than 1,000 yards in four seasons.

What made Arnold so much more effective last season was the emergence of freshman back-up Derek Lawson, who gained almost 700 yards and scored four touchdowns. With Lawson's ablility to fill in, it made Arnold stronger and more durable late in games.

While ASU is a good running team, it also has plenty of receiving threats. Senior receivers Brandon Thompkins and Jahbari McLennan each caught 32 passes last season and averaged better than 14 yards a catch.

The big question: Will the line hold up? Starting guards Dominic Padrta and Drew Hilton will anchor the group, while massive tight end J.T. Jordan (6-1, 274) could be one of the team's biggest surprises.

DEFENSE

The Red Wolves have eight starters returning from a very athletic defense that allowed 23 points a game in 2008.

Opponents certainly have to account for senior end Alex Carrington, who was the Sun Belt Defensive Player of the Year last season, after he had 19 tackles for losses and a league-best 10.5 sacks.

The defensive line should again be strong with Carrington, junior Bryan Hall and seniors Khari Mays and Stanley Wakwe. The group is quick and outstanding against the run, as evidenced by the fact the Red Wolves allowed just 125 yards a game on the ground in 2008.

ASU lost an outstanding linebacker to graduation in Ben Owens, who led the team with 87 tackles, but this group has a chance to be very good.

Junior Darious Glover was fifth on the team with 54 tackles last season, while sophomores Michael Adams and Demario Davis have a bright future.

The secondary is full of playmakers, led by junior safeties M.D. Jennings (67 tackles, three interceptions) and Evan Van Dolah, as well as senior corners Daylan Walker and Paul Stephens.

ASU was opportunistic last season, averaging two turnovers per game. Plenty of returning experience makes that number reachable again.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Red Wolves have one of the best weapons around in senior placekicker Josh Arauco, who made 17 of 20 field-goal attempts and 37 extra-point attempts last season. ASU lost punter Brett Shrable, but sophomore Ryan Wilbourn looks like a good replacement.

ASU has very good kick returners in Brandon Thompkins, Jahbari McLennan and Daylan Walker.

OVERVIEW

The Red Wolves have the talent and experience at key positions on both sides of the ball to challenge Troy for the Sun Belt title in 2009. Arkansas State has a week-three home game against Troy, so both teams will know early how they stack up.

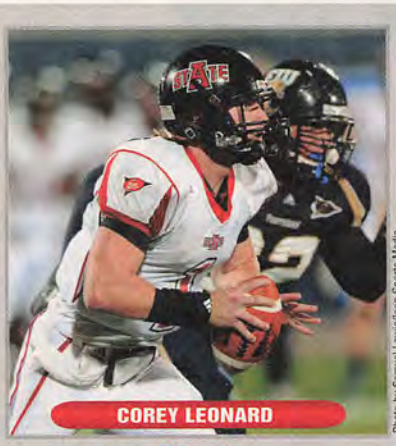

COREY LEONARD

Photo by Samuel Lewis/Icon Sports Media

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Corey Leonard***	**6-1**	**207**	**Sr.**
	Ryan Aplin	6-1	213	Fr.
RB	**Reggie Arnold***	**5-9**	**219**	**Sr.**
	Derek Lawson	5-11	214	So.
FB	Jeff Blake	5-10	239	Jr.
	Jermaine Robertson	5-11	230	So.
WR	**Jahbari McLennan***	**5-11**	**188**	**Sr.**
	Jarriel Norman	5-9	183	Sr.
WR	**Brandon Thompkins***	**5-9**	**180**	**Sr.**
	Taylor Clements	5-10	183	Sr.
TE	J.T. Jordan	6-1	274	Sr.
	Trevor Gillott	6-2	218	Sr.
LT	Kiano Prater	6-3	292	Sr.
	Brian Evans	6-5	308	Fr.
LG	**Dominic Padrta***	**6-4**	**312**	**Sr.**
	Alfred Louis	6-3	306	Jr
C	Tom Castilaw	6-3	297	Jr.
	Eric Allen	6-0	300	Fr.
RG	**Drew Hilton***	**6-3**	**302**	**Jr.**
	Sifa Etu	6-1	304	Jr.
RT	Derek Newton	6-5	313	Sr.
	Delano Moore	6-3	306	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Alex Carrington***	**6-5**	**284**	**Sr.**
	Jeremy Gibson	6-5	260	So.
DT	**Khari Mays***	**6-2**	**288**	**Sr.**
	Dorvus Woods	6-3	261	So.
DT	**Bryan Hall***	**6-1**	**284**	**Jr.**
	Greg McCall	5-11	297	So.
DE	Stanley Wakwe	6-1	246	Sr.
	Timothy Starson	6-5	240	Fr.
LB	**Darious Glover***	**6-1**	**220**	**Jr.**
	Demario Davis	6-3	231	So.
LB	Michael Adams	6-1	245	So.
	Nathan Herrold	6-2	234	Fr.
LB	Greg Hardy	6-0	246,	Sr.
	Javon McKinnon*	**6-0**	**236**	**Jr.**
CB	Paul Stephens	5-9	166	Sr.
	Cordarious Mingo	5-11	182	Sr.
CB	**Daylan Walker***	**5-9**	**177**	**Sr.**
	Walter Moody	5-11	178	Jr.
SS	**M.D. Jennings***	**6-0**	**172**	**Jr.**
	Kelcie McCray	6-2	190	So.
FS	**Evan Van Dolah***	**6-2**	**213**	**Sr.**
	Jaquan Kilcrease	6-2	199	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
PK	**Josh Arauco***	**5-9**	**218**	**Sr.**
P	Ryan Wilbourn	5-10	157	So.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	MISSISSIPPI VALLEY STATE
Sept. 12	at Nebraska
Sept. 26	TROY
Oct. 3	at Iowa
Oct. 13	at Louisiana-Monroe
Oct. 24	FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
Oct. 31	at Louisville
Nov. 7	LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE
Nov. 14	at Florida Atlantic
Nov. 21	at Middle Tennessee
Nov. 28	NORTH TEXAS
Dec. 3	at Western Kentucky

2008 Results

(6-6, 3-3)

W	at Texas A&M	18-14
W	TEXAS SOUTHERN	83-10
L	SOUTHERN MISS	24-27
W	MIDDLE TENNESSEE	31-14
L	at Memphis	17-29
W	LOUISIANA-MONROE	37-29
L	at Louisiana-Lafayette	23-28
L	at Alabama	0-35
L	at Florida International	21-22
W	FLORIDA ATLANTIC	28-14
W	at North Texas	33-28
L	at Troy	9-35

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.0	52
Rushing	203.3	18
Passing	195.5	80
Total	398.8	38
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	23.8	53
Rushing	125.2	32
Passing	211.3	63
Total	336.5	46
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 9	+ 0.75	18

FLORIDA ATLANTIC OWLS

NATIONAL RANK 95

Sun Belt rank: 3rd | Record: 7-6 | Sun Belt record: 4-3 (T-3rd) | Stadium: Lockhart Stadium (20,450)

Owls in A Box

COACH: Howard Schnellenberger — At FAU: 48-48, 8 years; overall: 148-125-3, 24 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Darryl Jackson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kirk Hoza
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2007
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2006
RETURNING STARTERS: 10; 6 offense, 3 defense, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Rusty Smith, WR Cortez Gent, TE Jason Harmon, FB William Rose, DT Josh Savidge, CB Tarvoris Hill
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Owls should put points on the board. Smith holds several school passing records and has his leading receiver from last year, Gent, back as a target.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Owls have some rebuilding to do in their offensive line and overall on defense. Nearly the entire front seven has to be replaced, including all three linebackers, and half the secondary is gone from 2008.

OFFENSE

FAU returns lots of firepower in the passing game with senior quarterback Rusty Smith.

He has thrown for 56 touchdowns and nearly 7,000 yards in the past two years and will have his favorite target, wide receiver Cortez Gent, back along with another returning starter at wide receiver, Chris Bonner.

Tight end Jamari Grant, who was the Owls' No. 2 receiver in 2008 with 45 receptions to Gent's 60, also returns, but finds himself behind senior Jason Harmon going into the fall. Harmon missed all of 2008 after injuring his knee in the spring game. He had 63 catches in 2007.

The top two tailbacks, 1,000-yard rusher Charles Pierre and versatile DiIvory Edgecomb, are gone, and the Owls will have four new starters on the line.

Senior guard David Matlock is the only returning starter, but there are juniors and seniors ready to step in. Senior Carl Spitale had a good spring and is No. 1 at right tackle.

Sophomore Alfred Morris will go into fall ahead of junior Willie Floyd at tailback after moving from fullback. Morris ran for 131 yards on 18 carries in the spring game after logging only seven carries as a freshman. The expected starter at tailback, junior Jeff Blanchard, injured his knee in the spring and could miss the season.

Senior fullback Willie Rose, a solid blocker, averaged nearly five yards a carry in 2008, compiling 308 yards. He also caught 23 passes for 168 more.

DEFENSE

The Owls are looking at a nearly complete rebuilding job on defense with eight new starters. But they do have a nice trio of ends with sophomores Kevin Cyrille and Jamere Johnson and junior Daniel Joseph.

Tackle Josh Savidge is coming off a strong performance in 2008 after missing half of 2007 with a knee injury. Junior Dino Cox also had one start in 2008 at tackle.

Edward Bradwell, Malik Eugene and Michael Lockley came out of the spring as the new starters at linebacker. Bradwell had the biggest impact of the trio in 2008 with 41 tackles, including a sack.

Cornerback Tarvoris Hill is one of two returning starters in the secondary. Senior Erick McIntosh starts at the other corner but the hope is that junior Tavious Polo can regain the form from his freshman year when he had seven interceptions. He struggled with some injury problems and started only one game at corner in 2008.

The other returning starter in the secondary is junior free safety Ed Alexander. He had three interceptions last year.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Punter Keegan Peterson averaged just more than 38 yards on 62 punts last year with about a third of them downed inside the opponent's 20-yard line. The Owls will be looking for a new kicker, however, and that job looks to go to junior Ross Gornall, who shared kickoff duties with Warley Leroy.

Polo averaged just under 10 yards a try on 21 punt returns last year. If Blanchard isn't available, Floyd is the most experienced kick returner with seven runbacks for a 20.7-yard average.

OVERVIEW

The Owls have won consecutive bowl games and have a chance to get back to the postseason if they can find answers on defense. They have the offensive weapons for success. Their first two games are on the road against Nebraska and South Carolina, but the schedule gets manageable after that.

RUSTY SMITH

Photo by Mark Cunningham/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Rusty Smith***	**6-5**	**212**	**Sr.**
	Jeff VanCamp	6-5	210	Jr.
RB	Alfred Morris	5-11	222	So.
	Willie Floyd	5-9	165	Jr.
FB	**William Rose***	**6-1**	**227**	**Sr.**
	David Muniz	5-11	211	Jr.
WR	**Cortez Gent***	**6-2**	**170**	**Sr.**
	Lester Jean	6-3	195	Jr.
WR	**Chris Bonner***	**6-3**	**195**	**Sr.**
	Conshario Johnson	6-1	190	Sr.
TE	Jason Harmon	6-3	215	Sr.
	Jamari Grant*	**6-5**	**215**	**Sr.**
LT	Lavoris Williams	6-3	270	Jr.
	Troy Niblack	6-6	280	Fr.
LG	**David Matlock***	**6-3**	**290**	**Sr.**
	Samuel McRoy	6-4	275	Jr.
C	Ryan Wischnefski	6-2	317	Jr.
	Jordan Sessa	6-5	280	Fr.
RG	Kevin Miller	6-3	304	Sr.
	Eric Hansen	6-5	240	Fr.
RT	Carl Spitale	6-8	340	Sr.
	Jared Pizzuti	6-4	225	Fr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Kevin Cyrille	6-4	275	So.
	Paul Muse	6-4	250	Sr.
DT	Dino Cox	6-3	240	Jr.
	Jarvis Givens	6-3	300	So.
DT	**Josh Savidge***	**6-2**	**285**	**Sr.**
	Andy Czuprynski	6-5	260	Fr.
DE	Daniel Joseph	6-1	250	Jr.
	Jamere Johnson	6-4	220	So.
LB	Malik Eugene	6-3	230	Jr.
	Yourhighness Morgan	6-3	225	Fr.
LB	Michael Lockley	6-2	220	Jr.
	Alex Pattee	6-2	240	Fr.
LB	Edward Bradwell	6-1	200	Sr.
	Tony Walding	6-1	210	Fr.
CB	Erick McIntosh	6-0	180	Sr.
	Tavious Polo	5-11	175	Jr.
CB	**Tarvoris Hill***	**6-0**	**169**	**So.**
	Curtis Cross	5-9	170	So.
SS	Austen Jensen	6-1	190	Jr.
	Marcus Bartels	5-9	161	So.
FS	**Ed Alexander***	**6-1**	**171**	**Jr.**
	Rod Huggins	6-1	185	Jr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Ross Gornall	5-11	190	Jr.
P	**Keegan Peterson***	**6-0**	**185**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	at Nebraska
Sept. 19	at South Carolina
Sept. 26	LOUISIANA-MONROE
Oct. 3	WYOMING
Oct. 17	at North Texas
Oct. 24	at Louisiana-Lafayette
Oct. 31	MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Nov. 7	at UAB
Nov. 14	ARKANSAS STATE
Nov. 21	at Troy
Nov. 28	WESTERN KENTUCKY
Dec. 5	at Florida International

2008 Results

(7-6, 4-3)

L	at Texas	10-52
W	UAB	49-34
L	at Michigan State	0-17
L	at Minnesota	3-37
L	at Middle Tennessee	13-14
L	TROY	17-30
W	at Western Kentucky	24-20
W	at Louisiana-Monroe	29-28
W	NORTH TEXAS	46-13
W	LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE	40-29
L	at Arkansas State	14-28
W	FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL (OT)	57-50
	Motor City Bowl	
W	vs. Central Michigan	24-21

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.1	62
Rushing	138.8	66
Passing	254.8	25
Total	393.5	42

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	28.7	81
Rushing	178.7	98
Passing	221.7	81
Total	400.4	92

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
- 9	+ 0.69	101

FLORIDA INT'L GOLDEN PANTHERS

NATIONAL RANK 100

Sun Belt rank: 4th | Record: 5-7 | Sun Belt record: 3-5 (T-5th) | Stadium: FIU Stadium (20,000)

Golden Panthers in A Box

COACH: Mario Cristobal -- At FIU and overall: 6-18, 2 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bill Legg
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Phillip Galiano
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: None
LAST BOWL: None
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 9 offense, 6 defense, kicker.
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Paul McCall, RB Darriet Perry, WR T.Y. Hilton, WR Greg Ellingson, C Brad Serini, LB Scott Bryant, CB Anthony Gaitor
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Panthers are a salty bunch on offense, especially if Perry follows up with the performance he had in his late-season debut last fall when he ran for 115 yards against Florida Atlantic. McCall threw 15 touchdown passes and has his top five receivers back.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The defensive line loses three starters, and five of the front seven are gone from a unit that gave up 156 yards on the ground. The secondary looks to be OK, but if the Panthers don't improve on their run defense and get pressure on the passer, how good the defensive backs are won't matter.

OFFENSE

FIU looks to find more of a scoring threat, and a lot more wins, after finishing last in the Sun Belt Conference and 96th in the country in total offense.

The Panthers' anemic running game should get a shot in the arm from sophomore running back Darriet Perry. Plus, all five starters return to a line anchored by junior center Brad Serini, a second-team All-Sun Belt pick last year.

Perry played in only two games, both late in the season, and amassed 173 yards on just 31 carries. He scored two touchdowns.

If the running game produces, that should open up what looks to be a potentially effective passing game. Paul McCall, who led FIU to its only win in his lone start of 2007, threw for 2,332 yards and 15 touchdowns in starting all 12 games last year.

McCall will have his top five targets back in wide receivers T.Y. Hilton, Greg Ellingson, Junior Mertile and Jeremy Dickens, plus tight end Eric Kirchenberg.

Hilton last season caught a team-high seven touchdown passes and earned conference Freshman of the Year honors with his 1,013 receiving yards. He also ran for two touchdowns.

Serini has started every game for the past two seasons, and senior tackle Joe Alajajian has 29 starts over the past three years. Junior college transfer Ulu Matavao started all 12 games at left tackle a year ago, and Andy Leavine and Mario Caraballo both recovered from early injuries to start more than half the season at the guard spots.

DEFENSE

The Panthers lose only five starters from last year's unit that ranked fourth in the league, giving up under 394 yards a game, but three of them are up front.

The only returning starter on the line is senior end Armond Willis, who started eight games and had 31 tackles, including a sack.

End Reggie Jones returns after playing just two games last season before suffering a foot injury. He recorded four tackles, one of them a sack, in his brief 2008 appearance. He also intercepted a pass.

In addition to bulking up the run defense, the Panthers also want to improve their pass rush. They had only 18 sacks, seven of them by Quinten Newman and Robert Mitchell, who don't return.

The Panthers do welcome back corner Anthony Gaitor, an all-conference selection as a sophomore last year, and Scott Bryant, who was the team's leading tackler (89) and honorable mention All-Sun Belt at linebacker. Gaitor had five interceptions, returning two for scores.

SPECIALISTS

Senior Dustin Rivest converted 12 of 19 field goal attempts, and also served as the backup punter behind Carlos Munera, who doesn't return. But Rivest will face a challenge for both jobs from incoming freshman Jack Griffin, one of the nation's top kicking prospects.

The return game will be in the capable hands of T.Y. Hilton, who is as explosive running back punts (14.8 average, one touchdown) and kickoffs (23.4 average, one touchdown) as he is catching passes.

OVERVIEW

FIU made significant progress in 2008 after winning just one game in 2007 and going winless in 2006. The Panthers have potential on offense to continue making strides forward, but if they don't find the answers on defense, they are going to be hard-pressed to duplicate their five wins of a year ago.

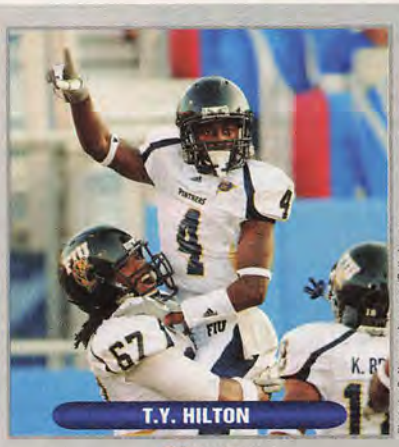

T.Y. HILTON

Photo by G. Newman Lowrance/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Paul McCall***	**6-1**	**198**	**Sr.**
	Wayne Younger	6-3	180	Jr.
RB	Darriet Perry	5-9	195	So.
	Daunte Owens	5-10	198	Sr.
WR	**Greg Ellingson***	**6-3**	**183**	**Jr.**
	Marquis Rolle	6-3	195	So.
WR	T.Y. Hilton	5-10	175	So.
	Jason Frierson	5-9	175	Jr.
WR	**Junior Mertile***	**6-0**	**180**	**So.**
	Elliott Dix	6-1	197	Sr.
TE	**Eric Kirchenberg***	**6-4**	**235**	**Sr.**
	John Ellis	5-11	237	Sr.
LT	**Ula Matavao***	**6-3**	**310**	**Sr.**
	James Wiggins	6-4	255	So.
LG	**Andy Leavine***	**6-5**	**292**	**Sr.**
	Luis Pena	6-3	290	Sr.
C	**Brad Serini***	**6-3**	**300**	**Jr.**
	Juan Gonzalez	6-0	252	So.
RG	**Mario Caraballo***	**6-2**	**270**	**Jr.**
	Chris Cawthon	6-4	305	So.
RT	**Joe Alajajian***	**6-4**	**283**	**Sr.**
	Devon Dickerson	6-4	250	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Reginald Jones	6-2	264	Sr.
	Thatcher Starling	6-4	251	Jr.
DT	Jonas Murrell	6-2	350	Sr.
	Andre Pound	6-3	280	Fr.
NG	Jonathan Nieves	6-2	250	So.
	Joey Harris	6-3	230	Fr.
DE	**Armond Willis***	**6-2**	**225**	**Sr.**
	Cody Pellicer	6-5	220	So.
LB	**Scott Bryant***	**5-10**	**220**	**Sr.**
	Jarvis Wilson	6-2	200	Jr.
LB	**Tyler Clawson***	**6-0**	**222**	**Sr.**
	Toronto Smith	5-10	220	Jr.
LB	Aaron Davis	6-0	240	So.
	Winston Fraser	6-2	225	Fr.
CB	**Anthony Gaitor***	**5-10**	**178**	**So.**
	Emmanuel Souarin	5-11	180	Fr.
CB	Dezeriah Johnson	6-1	178	Sr.
	Peter Riley	6-0	173	Sr.
SS	**Jeremiah Weatherspoon***	**6-2**	**213**	**Sr.**
	Kreg Brown*	**5-10**	**188**	**Jr.**
FS	Ashlyn Parker	6-0	207	Jr.
	Chuck Grace	5-10	185	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Dustin Rivest***	**5-8**	**175**	**Sr.**
P	Dustin Rivest	5-8	175	Sr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 12	at Alabama
Sept. 19	at Rutgers
Sept. 26	TOLEDO
Oct. 3	at Louisiana-Monroe
Oct. 10	at Western Kentucky
Oct. 17	TROY
Oct. 24	at Arkansas State
Oct. 31	LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE
Nov. 7	at Middle Tennessee
Nov. 14	NORTH TEXAS
Nov. 21	at Florida
Dec. 5	FLORIDA ATLANTIC

2008 Results

(5-7, 3-4)

L	at Kansas	10-40
L	at Iowa	0-42
L	SOUTH FLORIDA	9-17
W	at Toledo	35-16
W	at North Texas	42-10
W	MIDDLE TENNESSEE	31-21
L	at Troy	23-33
L	at Louisiana-Lafayette	20-49
W	ARKANSAS STATE	22-21
L	LOUISIANA-MONROE	27-31
L	at Florida Atlantic	50-57
W	WESTERN KENTUCKY	27-3

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.7	68
Rushing	98.7	107
Passing	218.3	56
Total	316.9	96
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	28.3	79
Rushing	156.2	80
Passing	212.9	67
Total	369.1	71
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 4	+ 0.33	40

MIDDLE TENNESSEE BLUE RAIDERS

NATIONAL RANK 103

Sun Belt rank: 5th | Record: 5-7 | Sun Belt record: 3-4 (T-5th) | Stadium: Floyd Stadium (30,788)

Blue Raiders in A Box

COACH: Rick Stockstill — At Middle Tennessee and overall: 17-20, 3 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tony Franklin
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Manny Diaz
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2006, co-champs
LAST BOWL: 2006, Motor City
RETURNING STARTERS: 19; 10 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Dwight Dasher, RB Phillip Tanner, WR Malcolm Beyah, WR Patrick Honeycutt, LB Danny Carmichael, DB Alex Suber, S Jeremy Kellem
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Blue Raiders return a lot of experience on both sides of the ball. The offensive line was a weakness last year, but should be a strength. The defensive front should be a strength and most likely will put a lot of pressure on the quarterback.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Blue Raiders don't have a lot of depth in the backfield, meaning freshmen will have to produce. Defensively, Middle Tennessee is thin and inexperienced at linebacker with the exception of Danny Carmichael.

OFFENSE

The Blue Raiders return 10 starters on offense, but there remains a question at quarterback following the graduation of Joe Craddock, who passed for 2,677 yards and 15 touchdowns.

Junior Dwight Dasher beat out redshirt freshman Brent Burnette in the spring. Dasher had an outstanding freshman year, but struggled and played sparingly behind Craddock last season.

Dasher will be operating with new coordinator Tony Franklin, who lasted just seven games at Auburn last year while unable to successfully install a spread offense.

Franklin will try to do the same at Middle Tennessee, which is loaded at wide receiver. Five players — Eldred King, Patrick Honeycutt, Malcolm Beyah, Wes Caldwell and Sancho McDonald — combined for 188 catches and 16 touchdowns last season.

Senior tailback Phillip Tanner rushed for 714 yards and 15 touchdowns last season, but with Desmond Gee moving back to wideout, freshmen will have to provide depth in the backfield.

The line was young last season and predictably struggled. It should be a strength this season. Center Mark Thompson, tackle Mark Fisher and guard Jamal Lewis will anchor the group.

Alex Stuart, Mike Williams and Brandon McLeroy all started at times as true freshmen a year ago and gained valuable experience. A wildcard could be Jake Padrick, a sophomore center who missed last season with injuries.

DEFENSE

The Blue Raiders return seven starters from a defense that allowed 25 points a game last season. Middle Tennessee operates out of a 4-3 scheme but often changes things up and blitzes from all over the field.

One of the unit's strengths will be at end where Chris McCoy, Jamari Lattimore and Emmanuel Perez are poised for outstanding seasons. Inside, Brandon Perry, Dwight Smith and Gary Tucker have good experience.

With the exception of Danny Carmichael, the linebacker position is a bit of a concern after the Blue Raiders lost two starters. Cam Robinson, Gorby Loreus and Antwan Davis all will see plenty of playing time.

Another strength will be in the secondary, led by senior corner Alex Suber and junior corner Rod Issac. There also is good depth at the position. Ballhawking Jeremy Kellem and Kevin Brown, both junior safeties, also return.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Coach Rick Stockstill opted last season to sign a kicker, Alan Gendreau, rather than select from a group of walk-ons. It paid off as Gendreau had an excellent first season, making 10 of 14 field goals and all 32 of his extra-point attempts.

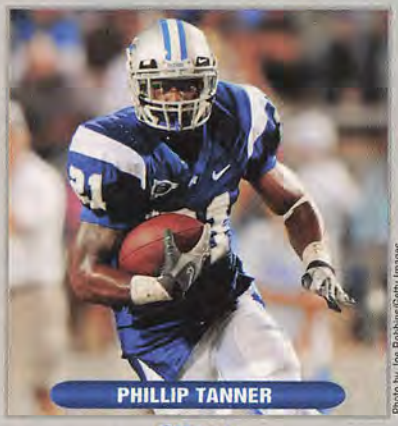
Senior David DeFatta averaged almost 41 yards a punt a year ago. The return game, with Gee and Honeycutt, is adequate, while the coverage teams look to be outstanding again.

OVERVIEW

Several factors will determine if the Blue Raiders can improve on last season's 5-7 mark, most notably whether Dasher can assume a leadership role and make good decisions in the spread offense.

The Blue Raiders are finally near the full 85 scholarship limit, but almost 50 of those players are freshmen and sophomores.

Injuries doomed Middle Tennessee two seasons ago, but if the Blue Raiders can avoid a rash of them, they'll have an opportunity to be in the mix in the Sun Belt. The league schedule will be difficult, however, with road trips to defending champion Troy, Motor City Bowl champion Florida Atlantic and Louisiana-Monroe.



PHILLIP TANNER

Photo by Joe Robbins/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Dwight Dasher	5-10	204	Jr.
	Brent Burnette	6-3	207	Fr.
RB	**Phillip Tanner***	**6-0**	**211**	**Jr.**
	D.D. Kyles	6-1	191	So.
WR	Chris McClover	6-4	203	Sr.
	Andrew Banks	5-9	150	So.
WR	**Desmond Gee***	**5-8**	**158**	**Sr.**
	Eldred King	5-9	167	Sr.
WR	**Malcolm Beyah***	**5-11**	**190**	**So.**
	Gene Delle Donne (TE)	6-5	251	Sr.
WR	**Patrick Honeycutt***	**5-9**	**169**	**Sr.**
	Michael Cannon	5-10	190	Sr.
LT	**Mike Williams***	**6-2**	**253**	**So.**
	Jeremy Michel	6-5	278	Jr.
LG	**Jamal Lewis***	**6-3**	**297**	**Jr.**
	Evon Lettsome	6-4	291	Jr.
C	**Mark Thompson***	**6-5**	**302**	**Sr.**
	Jake Padrick	6-1	281	So.
RG	**Alex Stuart***	**6-3**	**289**	**So.**
	Brandon McLeroy*	**6-3**	**311**	**So.**
RT	**Mark Fisher***	**6-3**	**281**	**Jr.**
	Chris Hawkins	6-3	276	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Chris McCoy***	**6-4**	**252**	**Sr.**
	Jamari Lattimore	6-3	232	Jr.
LT	Brandon Perry	6-1	312	Sr.
	Gary Tucker	6-2	256	Jr.
RT	Dwight Smith	6-2	263	Jr.
	Kendall Dangerfield	6-2	275	Fr.
DE	**Emmanuel Perez***	**6-1**	**228**	**Jr.**
	Jamari Lattimore	6-3	232	Jr.
LB	Cam Robinson	6-0	222	Sr.
	Gorby Loreus	5-11	224	So.
LB	**Danny Carmichael***	**6-0**	**246**	**Sr.**
	Norman Washington	5-11	230	So.
LB	Antwan Davis	6-1	217	Jr.
	Darin Davis	6-2	202	So.
CB	**Rod Issac***	**5-11**	**188**	**Jr.**
	Marcus Udell	6-0	188	Sr.
CB	**Alex Suber***	**5-9**	**166**	**Sr.**
	Jawan Carson	5-9	179	So.
S	**Jeremy Kellem***	**5-10**	**185**	**Jr.**
	Derrick Crumpton	5-11	183	So.
S	**Kevin Brown***	**6-1**	**203**	**Jr.**
	Josh Gregory	5-9	202	Sr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Alan Gendreau***	**5-10**	**182**	**So.**
P	**David DeFatta***	**5-10**	**188**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	at Clemson
Sept. 12	MEMPHIS
Sept. 19	at Maryland
Sept. 26	at North Texas
Oct. 6	at Troy
Oct. 17	MISSISSIPPI STATE
Oct. 24	WESTERN KENTUCKY
Oct. 31	at Florida Atlantic
Nov. 7	FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
Nov. 14	LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE
Nov. 21	ARKANSAS STATE
Nov. 28	at Louisiana-Monroe

2008 Results

(5-7, 3-4)

L	TROY	17-31
W	MARYLAND	24-14
L	at Kentucky	14-20
L	at Arkansas State	14-31
W	FLORIDA ATLANTIC	14-13
L	at Florida International	21-31
L	at Louisville	23-42
L	at Mississippi State	22-31
W	LOUISIANA-MONROE	24-21
W	at Western Kentucky	21-10
W	NORTH TEXAS	52-13
L	at Louisiana-Lafayette	28-42

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	22.8	84
Rushing	106.9	102
Passing	241.7	39
Total	348.6	70
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.9	62
Rushing	153.5	79
Passing	212.8	66
Total	366.3	66
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 3	+ 0.25	43

LOUISIANA-MONROE WARHAWKS

NATIONAL RANK 110

Sun Belt rank: 6 | Record: 4-8 | Sun Belt record: 3-4 (T-5th) | Stadium: Malone Stadium (30,427)

Warhawks in A Box

COACH: Charlie Weatherbie — At ULM: 25-45, 6 years; overall: 70-109, 16 years.
OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Vance Vice, Jonas Weatherbie
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Troy Reffett
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1992, Southland
LAST BOWL: 1993 I-AA playoffs
RETURNING STARTERS: 17, 7 offense, 8 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Trey Revell, RB Frank Goodin, WR Anthony McCall, LB Cardia Jackson, S James Truxillo, P Scott Love
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Experience shouldn't be a problem for the Warhawks. That's a positive, because maturity on the team will be at a premium after an enormous shakeup on Weatherbie's staff that led to the hiring of six new coaches.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Rushing offense was the only major category in which the Warhawks ranked in the top half of the league in 2008. A major cog from that, QB Kinsmon Lancaster, is gone. Goodin and Revell will have to step up their games to keep the Warhawks from plummeting in the rushing ranks.

OFFENSE

The Warhawks must find a way to replace their most dynamic threat — quarterback Kinsmon Lancaster — after a season in which they finished seventh in the Sun Belt in total offense and sixth in scoring.

Leading rusher Frank Goodin (71.2 ypg) returns to pace the ground game, as does backup Rodney Lovett, but the biggest question will be under center. Junior Trey Revell is the frontrunner after seeing action in nine games in 2008, including one start.

Sophomore Anthony McCall finished as ULM's third-leading receiver in 2008, and returns to man the outside, along with senior J.J. McCoy. Sophomore wideout Luther Ambrose shows promise as a playmaker, having a 91-yard kick return and a 69-yard touchdown pass last season.

The loss of all-conference tight end Zeek Zacharie to graduation is a huge blow for a struggling offense. Zacharie was the team's second-leading receiver a year ago, recording 46 catches for 510 yards. The Warhawks don't have a tight end who caught a pass in 2008.

Four starters return along the line, anchored by behemoth Doug Stroud at left guard. Tight end Mitch Doyle, a backup to Zacharie in 2008, moves to tackle to provide depth.

DEFENSE

There's no lack of talent defensively, led by All-Sun Belt senior linebacker Cardia Jackson. He led the team with 127 tackles, including four sacks, last season. He also had a couple of interceptions and could be one of the conference's top draft prospects in 2010.

ULM has switched to a 3-3-5 defense under new coordinator Troy Reffett, who came from New Mexico, where head coach Rocky Long was a master of the scheme. The defense is designed to attack and blitz from all over the field and better utilize a defense's athletes.

ULM doesn't have an abundance of depth on the line, but Jackson gets help up front from all-conference defensive end Aaron Morgan. He leads a front four that returns three starters, losing only DeMarcus Carmouche.

Rover Josh Thompson would be one of four returnees in the secondary if he is able to get a medical hardship year from the NCAA, but school officials say it's "not looking good."

Maybe the most important returning player in the secondary is senior James Truxillo. Expected to be an all-league performer in 2008, Truxillo played in just two games after suffering an ACL injury in the last-second loss to Arkansas.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Placekicker Radi Jabour had an up-and-down freshman campaign, but showed promise and should be steady.

Senior Scott Love has been one of the league's top punters for the past three years. An All-Sun Belt selection as a sophomore, Love should again find himself at the top of the league rankings.

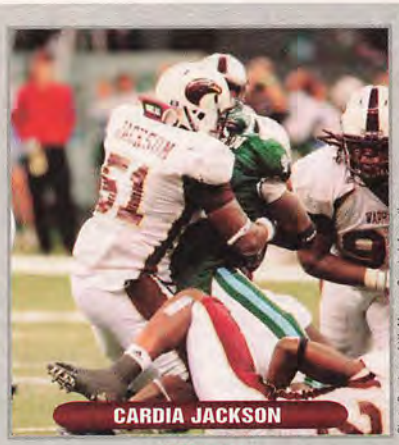
Lovett is the No. 1 option on kickoff returns. With a new quarterback, any field position help he can give will only be a plus. McCoy should return punts after backing up Darrell McNeal a year ago.

OVERVIEW

Louisiana-Monroe rarely has a lack of athletes on the field. The biggest problem for the Warhawks has been putting it all together. That didn't happen last season.

After a 6-6 season in 2007 — including a win over Alabama — the Warhawks took a step back in 2008.

With a solid returning group and a year of experience, if ULM can find the answer at quarterback, it could be poised for a big year.



CARDIA JACKSON

Photo Courtesy of UL-Monroe Sports Information

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Trey Revell	6-5	218	Jr.
	Cody Wells	6-0	187	Fr.
RB	**Frank Goodin***	**5-9**	**200**	**Jr.**
	Rodney Lovett	5-11	203	Jr.
WR	**J.J. McCoy***	**5-11**	**168**	**Sr.**
	Luther Ambrose	5-10	166	So.
WR	Tim Taylor	5-9	173	So.
	Drew Martin	6-0	179	Fr.
WR	**Anthony McCall***	**6-1**	**180**	**So.**
	Julian Griffin	6-3	197	So.
TE	Alvin Jordan	6-2	239	Jr.
	Keavon Milton	6-5	246	Fr.
LT	**Ryan Dercher***	**6-5**	**305**	**Sr.**
	Cade Burks	6-4	315	So.
LG	**Doug Stroud***	**6-6**	**331**	**Jr.**
	Andrew Stout	6-3	286	Jr.
C	**Brett Thompson***	**6-3**	**280**	**Sr.**
	Daniel Hanson	6-1	285	Fr.
RG	**Justin Roberts***	**6-5**	**284**	**So.**
	Emmanuel Lockett	6-1	302	Sr.
RT	Mitch Doyle	6-5	264	Sr.
	Josh Andrews	6-6	304	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Jameson Jordan***	**6-5**	**233**	**Sr.**
	Troy Evans	6-2	246	So.
NG	**Aaron Williams***	**6-0**	**296**	**Sr.**
	Aaron Moore	5-11	283	Jr.
DE	**Aaron Morgan***	**6-4**	**224**	**Sr.**
	Michael Autwell	6-4	223	Fr.
LB	Theo Smith III	5-11	204	Jr.
	C.C. Carpenter	5-11	228	So.
LB	**Cardia Jackson***	**6-2**	**240**	**Sr.**
	DaCorris Ford	6-3	224	Fr.
LB	**Josh Thomas***	**6-2**	**223**	**Sr.**
	Jason Edwards	5-11	237	So.
DB	**James Truxillo***	**6-2**	**209**	**Sr.**
	Shaq Belson	5-9	213	So.
CB	**Nate Brown***	**5-10**	**175**	**So.**
	Sean Hornberger	5-10	166	So.
CB	**Otis Stamps***	**5-10**	**181**	**Sr.**
	Alex Blake	5-10	186	Jr.
S	Darius Prelow	6-1	197	So.
	Troy Giddens	6-0	207	Jr.
S	Alex Ibe	6-3	205	Jr.
	Preston Fuller	6-0	206	Jr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Radi Jabour***	**6-0**	**181**	**So.**
P	**Scott Love***	**6-0**	**204**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	at Texas
Sept. 12	TEXAS SOUTHERN
Sept. 19	at Arizona State
Sept. 26	at Florida Atlantic
Oct. 3	FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
Oct. 13	ARKANSAS STATE
Oct. 24	at Kentucky
Oct. 31	at Troy
Nov. 7	at North Texas
Nov. 14	WESTERN KENTUCKY
Nov. 21	at Louisiana-Lafayette
Nov. 28	MIDDLE TENNEESSEE

2008 Results

(4-8, 3-4)

L	at Auburn	0-34
L	vs. Arkansas (Little Rock)	27-28
W	ALABAMA A&M	37-15
L	at Tulane	10-24
L	LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE	35-44
L	at Arkansas State	29-37
W	NORTH TEXAS	35-23
L	FLORIDA ATLANTIC	28-29
W	TROY	31-30
L	at Middle Tennessee	21-24
L	at Ole Miss	0-59
W	at Florida International	31-27

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	23.7	79
Rushing	152.7	53
Passing	184.6	89
Total	337.3	82
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	31.2	93
Rushing	212.7	109
Passing	232.0	88
Total	444.7	109
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 2	+ 0.17	47

LA. - LAFAYETTE

RAGIN' CAJUNS

NATIONAL RANK 114

Sun Belt rank: 7 | Record: 6-6 | Sun Belt record: 5-2 (2nd) | Stadium: Cajun Field (31,000)

Ragin' Cajuns in A Box

COACH: Rickey Bustle — At ULL and overall: 32-50, 7 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ron Hudson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kevin Fouquier
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1994, Big West
LAST BOWL: 1970, Grantland Rice Bowl
RETURNING STARTERS: 17; 7 offense, 9 defense, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Brad McGuire, RB Undrea Sails, OG Brad Bustle, C Chris Fisher, LB Antwyne Zanders, FS Gerren Blount
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Ragin' Cajuns have always been able to run. Though the loss of the league's top two rushers is a big one, they return the offensive line intact, meaning a young stable of running backs and quarterbacks will get to play behind one of the league's top front lines.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Ragin' Cajuns return nine defensive starters, but that could be as problematic as helpful after struggling a year ago. The coaching staff has done some things to bolster the defense, but the offense shouldn't be nearly as effective, leaving the Cajun defense on the field more in 2009.

OFFENSE

The Ragin' Cajuns have to replace more offensive talent than any team in the Sun Belt.

Gone are star tailback Tyrone Fenroy (the school's all-time leading rusher), quarterback Michael Desormeaux (the 2008 Sun Belt Offensive Player of the Year) and wide receiver Jason Cherry (seven touchdowns) from what was the league's top offense.

Brad McGuire was the heir apparent at quarterback heading into spring practice, but a stellar spring by Chris Masson extended the competition into the fall. McGuire has a slight edge for now, and redshirt freshman Blaine Gautier can't be counted out.

Senior Undrea Sails is the man for now at running back, but he should rotate with a stable of young backs.

The good news for the Ragin' Cajuns is the league's best offensive line returns intact. Behind a pair of first-team all-league behemoths — guard Brad Bustle and center Chris Fisher — UL-Lafayette should be able to continue to run the ball as well as it has in the past.

The receiving corps, minus Cherry, is still talented, but not long on experience. A breakout year by tight end Ladarius Green could give the young quarterbacks another option and take some pressure off the outside passing game.

DEFENSE

Nine starters return, led by honorable mention all-conference linebacker Antwyne Zanders. The bad news is that it's a group that must greatly improve.

In 2008, the Ragin' Cajuns ranked seventh out of eight teams in the Sun Belt in scoring defense, allowing 33.7 points per game. That's not going to get it done for a team that will struggle early to find its offensive identity.

While there is plenty of experience defensively, what will be important to watch are the newer players stepping into their roles. Sophomore Derreck Dean will need to play strong at tackle to provide major run support for a unit gashed for more than 200 yards per game.

Junior Daylon McCoy, a starter at free safety in 2008, moves up to linebacker to add additional help.

Cornerbacks Orkeys Auriene and Dwight Bentley, along with free safety Gerren Blount, return, meaning the Cajuns should be adequate, though not spectacular against the pass.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Great special teamers are rarely missed until they're gone. That could be the case with departed kicker Drew Edmiston. He was 7 of 10 in field-goal attempts a year ago and accounted for 71 points. Either redshirt freshman Brett Baer or junior Tyler Albrecht will replace him.

Junior Spencer Ortego, who averaged 39.1 yards per punt in 2008, must help out winning field-position battles by at least matching that effort.

OVERVIEW

The Ragin' Cajuns were bowl eligible and finished second in the Sun Belt in 2008, but it will be tough to match that in 2009. Though only three starters were lost offensively, those three accounted for 3,600 yards and 44 touchdowns.

The schedule sets up well for ULL, which gets a chance for a home upset against Kansas State of the Big 12. Other home games are against Sun Belt favorite Troy and league contender Florida Atlantic.

But the offense is very young and the defense still has holes. The Ragin' Cajuns don't have enough to win it all, but they could have an indirect say in the Sun Belt title chase by pulling off an upset, or two.

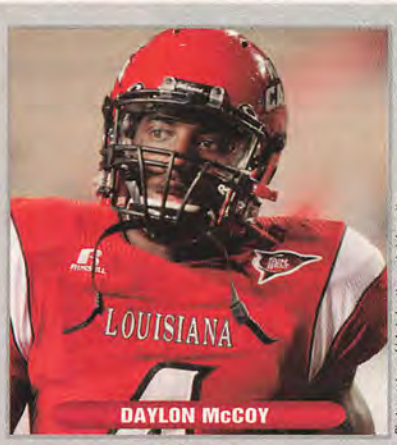


Photo courtesy of LA.-Lafayette sports information

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Brad McGuire	6-3	215	So.
	Chris Masson	6-2	200	So.
RB	Undrea Sails	5-8	200	Sr.
	Draylon Booker	6-0	176	Fr.
FB	**Geoffrey McCullough***	**5-10**	**220**	**Sr.**
	Phillip Walker	5-11	217	Sr.
WR	**Louis Lee***	**5-11**	**190**	**Sr.**
	Vernon Wolfe	6-0	180	Jr.
WR	Verlin Moore	5-10	175	Jr.
	Marlin Miller	5-10	185	Jr.
TE	Ladarius Green	6-5	220	So.
	Luke Aubrey	6-5	245	Sr.
LT	**Kyle Pirtle***	**6-7**	**300**	**Sr.**
	Kyle Plouhar	6-7	290	So.
LG	**Brad Bustle***	**6-4**	**295**	**Sr.**
	Leonardo Bates	6-4	288	Fr.
C	**Chris Fisher***	**6-3**	**285**	**Sr.**
	Evan Ruiz	6-4	300	Fr.
RG	**Ian Burks***	**6-5**	**295**	**Jr.**
	Jaron Odom	6-8	355	Fr.
RT	**Jonathan Decoster***	**6-5**	**302**	**Jr.**
	Colin Windsor	6-5	285	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Hall Davis***	**6-6**	**262**	**Sr.**
	Nate Douglas	6-3	252	So.
DT	Derreck Dean	5-11	295	So.
	Sharrick Moore	6-2	270	Jr.
DT	**Jermaine Rogers***	**6-5**	**285**	**Jr.**
	LaQuincy Williams	6-3	299	Sr.
DE	**Terrell Richardson***	**6-6**	**252**	**Jr.**
	Jeremy Cook	6-5	250	Jr.
LB	Grant Fleming	6-3	232	Jr.
	Devon Lewis-Buchanan	6-1	194	So.
LB	**Antwyne Zanders***	**6-2**	**220**	**Sr.**
	Richard Brooks	6-2	235	So.
LB	**Daylon McCoy***	**6-0**	**215**	**Jr.**
	Jezreel Washington*	**5-10**	**210**	**Sr.**
CB	**Orkeys Auriene***	**5-10**	**170**	**Jr.**
	Tim Jackson	5-11	183	Fr.
CB	**Dwight Bentley***	**5-10**	**170**	**So.**
	Junior Jean	6-0	180	Sr.
SS	Chris Richard	6-0	185	So.
	Phillip Nevels	5-10	200	Sr.
FS	**Gerren Blount***	**5-11**	**185**	**Sr.**
	Maurice Rolle	6-4	190	Jr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Brett Baer	5-11	171	Fr.
P	**Spencer Ortego***	**6-3**	**185**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	SOUTHERN
Sept. 12	KANSAS STATE
Sept. 19	at LSU
Sept. 26	at Nebraska
Oct. 10	NORTH TEXAS
Oct. 17	at Western Kentucky
Oct. 24	FLORIDA ATLANTIC
Oct. 31	at Florida International
Nov. 7	at Arkansas State
Nov. 14	at Middle Tennessee
Nov. 21	LOUISIANA-MONROE
Nov. 28	TROY

2008 Results

(6-6, 5-2)

L	at Southern Miss	21-51
L	at Illinois	17-20
W	KENT STATE	44-27
L	at Kansas State	37-45
W	at Louisiana-Monroe	44-35
W	at North Texas	59-30
W	ARKANSAS STATE	28-23
W	FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL	49-20
L	UTEP	24-37
L	at Florida Atlantic	29-40
L	at Troy	3-48
W	MIDDLE TENNESSEE	42-28

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	33.1	24
Rushing	263.7	7
Passing	185.5	88
Total	449.2	13
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	33.7	104
Rushing	213.3	111
Passing	216.3	75
Total	429.6	105
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 5	- 0.42	86

NORTH TEXAS MEAN GREEN

NATIONAL RANK 119

Sun Belt rank: 8 | Record: 1-11 | Sun Belt record: 0-7 (8th) | Stadium: Fouts Field (30,500)

Mean Green in A Box

COACH: Todd Dodge — At North Texas: 3-21, 2 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Todd Ford
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Gary DeLoach
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2004
LAST BOWL: 2004, New Orleans
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 7 offense, 8 defense, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: LB Tobe Nwigwe, RB Cam Montgomery, LB Craig Robertson, QB Riley Dodge, WR Sam Roberson, WR Tyler Stradford
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The offense, which hasn't exactly been overloading the scoreboard, should be better with Dodge running the show behind a line that returns every starter and key depth. Montgomery adds punch with a dangerous ground game.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Defense. Is there any doubt? The Mean Green has been college football's worst for two straight seasons, but with eight returning starters, things have to get better. Well, that's the assumption anyway.

OFFENSE

Two seasons into Todd Dodge's tenure at North Texas, the offense he promised hasn't really delivered.

The possibility exists this season with seven returning starters and a new quarterback in redshirt freshman Riley Dodge, the coach's son. Dodge, who replaces Giovanni Vizza (transferred to Texas A&M), has been running the offense since he scrambled out of the crib.

While lacking ideal size at the position, Dodge, a former Texas Longhorns commit, combines tremendous athletic ability with intelligence and competitiveness. The Mean Green can certainly use all three.

The addition of Dodge should be enough to jump-start the offense, and senior back Cam Montgomery (928 rushing yards, nine touchdowns in 2008) should keep it humming. Montgomery will be running behind a line that returns everyone, including Esteban Santiago, a two-year starter at tackle.

Also returning is Kelvin Drake, a 2007 all-conference second-teamer who missed last season with an ankle injury. With the emergence of J.J. Johnson at center, Drake got most of his reps at guard in the spring.

One of the biggest problems is replacing record-setting receiver Casey Fitzgerald, who went for 113 catches for 1,119 yards and six touchdowns last season. The Mean Green will look at a fleet of players, including transfers Jamaal Jackson, Michael Outlaw and Tyler Stradford.

Jackson is a quick-twitch inside receiver who has a lot of wiggle to his game. The 6-2 Stradford gives Dodge a big target, as does returning starter Sam Roberson.

DEFENSE

North Texas surrendered a staggering 47.6 points and 482.6 yards per game last season, both numbers last in the nation. Things could have been worse. Teams outscored North Texas 367-123 — a rounded average of 33-11 — in the first half before easing up.

Best among the eight returning starters is senior linebacker Tobe Nwigwe, who had a team-high 111 tackles and three interceptions. Nwigwe heads a group that also returns junior linebacker Craig Robertson, who was second with 94 tackles, and senior linebacker/safety Kylie Hill.

The Mean Green hit the junior college ranks in a search of immediate contributors. Possibilities include tackle Shavod Atkinson, tackle Kelvin Jackson and end John Weber.

Eddrick Gilmore, who split time between tackle and end last season, has settled at end and should be a playmaker. The Mean Green might have found another by dropping Brandon Akpunku from linebacker to rush end.

In the secondary, senior corner Antoine Bush brings the most experience, though he will be challenged by Adryan Adams. Royce Hill took his lumps as a freshman, but showed improvement over the final half of the season.

DaWaylon Cook moved from corner to handle free safety.

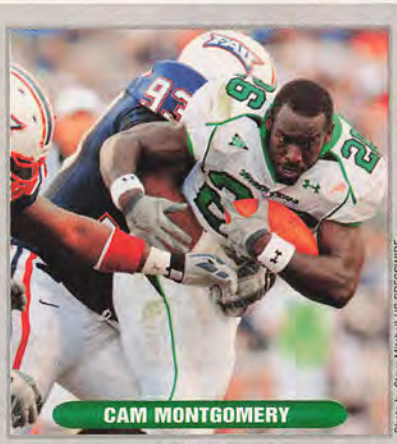
SPECIAL TEAMS

North Texas averaged a microscopic 4.6 yards on 10 punt returns last season. Yes, just 10. The other teams didn't have to punt much.

Finding a punter to replace Truman Spencer is another chore, with Jeremy Knott (12 of 17 field goals in 2008) getting first crack. Redshirt freshman Trent Deans is in the mix.

OVERVIEW

Todd Dodge figured it would take a while to get across his philosophies and to impart the desired attitude. Well, it's time. The Mean Green needs to at least show this season it can be competitive, something it has not been under Dodge.



CAM MONTGOMERY

Photo by Steve Mitchell-US PRESSWIRE

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Riley Dodge	6-0	182	Fr.
	Nathan Tune	6-4	203	Jr.
RB	**Cam Montgomery***	**6-1**	**210**	**Sr.**
	Micah Mosley	6-0	210	Jr.
WR	Michael Outlaw	5-11	190	Jr.
	Breece Johnson	6-1	172	Jr.
WR	Jamaal Jackson	5-10	175	Jr.
	Willie Taylor	5-10	165	Fr.
WR	**Sam Roberson***	**6-4**	**217**	**So.**
	Jamel Jackson	5-9	167	Jr.
WR	Tyler Stradford	6-2	175	Fr.
	B.J. Lewis	6-1	175	So.
LT	**Victor Gill***	**6-4**	**250**	**Jr.**
	Matthew Menard	6-3	305	Jr.
LG	**Gabe Hollivay***	**6-3**	**360**	**Sr.**
	Kelvin Drake	6-2	302	Jr.
C	**J.J. Johnson***	**6-2**	**280**	**So.**
	Kelvin Drake	6-2	302	Jr.
RG	**Coleman Feeley***	**6-5**	**318**	**So.**
	Tyler Bailey	6-2	296	Sr.
RT	**Esteban Santiago***	**6-3**	**285**	**Jr.**
	Matthew Menard	6-3	305	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Eddrick Gilmore***	**6-5**	**240**	**Sr.**
	John Weber	6-3	265	So.
DT	Shavod Atkinson	6-2	298	Jr.
	Draylon Ross	6-4	286	Sr.
DT	Jesse DeSoto	6-1	286	Jr.
	Kelvin Jackson	6-2	320	Jr.
DE	Brandon Akpunku	6-1	206	So.
	Sam Owusu-Hemeng	6-2	240	Jr.
LB	**Craig Robertson***	**6-0**	**226**	**Jr.**
	Steve Warren	6-1	227	Sr.
LB	**Tobe Nwigwe***	**6-1**	**251**	**Sr.**
	A.J. Penson*	**6-1**	**213**	**Jr.**
LB	**Kylie Hill***	**5-10**	**186**	**Sr.**
	Jeremy Phillips	6-3	196	Fr
CB	Antoine Bush	5-10	186	Sr.
	Adryan Adams*	**6-0**	**178**	**Sr.**
CB	**Royce Hill***	**5-10**	**173**	**So.**
	Ira Smith	5-10	185	Jr.
SS	**Darien Williams***	**5-10**	**185**	**So.**
	John Shorter	6-0	190	So.
FS	DaWaylon Cook	6-0	193	So.
	John Shorter	6-0	190	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Jeremy Knott***	**6-3**	**182**	**Sr.**
P	Jeremy Knott	6-3	182	Sr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 3	at Ball State
Sept. 12	OHIO
Sept. 19	at Alabama
Sept. 26	MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Oct. 10	at Louisiana-Lafayette
Oct. 17	FLORIDA ATLANTIC
Oct. 24	at Troy
Oct. 31	WESTERN KENTUCKY
Nov. 7	LOUISIANA-MONROE
Nov. 14	at Florida International
Nov. 21	ARMY
Nov. 28	at Arkansas State

2008 Results

(1-11, 0-7)

L	at Kansas State	6-45
L	TULSA	26-56
L	at LSU	3-41
L	at Rice	20-77
L	FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL	10-42
L	LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE	30-59
L	at Louisiana-Monroe	23-35
L	TROY	17-44
W	at Western Kentucky	51-40
L	at Florida Atlantic	13-46
L	at Middle Tennessee	13-52
L	ARKANSAS STATE	28-33

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	20.0	102
Rushing	127.3	82
Passing	235.7	44
Total	363.0	57
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	47.6	119
Rushing	207.0	105
Passing	275.5	115
Total	482.6	119
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 17	- 1.42	116

WESTERN KENTUCKY HILLTOPPERS

NATIONAL RANK 120

Sun Belt rank: 9 | Record: 2-10 | Stadium: Houchens Industries-L.T. Smith Stadium (23,500)

Hilltoppers in A Box

2008: 2-10 overall
COACH: David Elson — At Western Kentucky and overall: 39-32, 6 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Walter Wells
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Dietzel
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 8 offense, 6 defense, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Brandon Smith, QB Marcus Vasquez, RB Bobby Rainey, OLB Blake Boyd, FS Mark Santoro, LG Cody Hughes, WR Jake Gaebler, DE Jared Clendenin
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: With help from first- and second-year freshmen, WKU will be much more athletic this season — especially in the offensive backfield. The offensive line, which returns four starters, should be vastly improved.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Hilltoppers will be forced to rely on several underclassmen for major minutes. The defensive line is extremely thin, and the quarterback position has almost no game experience. WKU was 0-5 against Sun Belt teams last season.

OFFENSE

The Hilltoppers return eight starters to an offense that will undergo a slight face-lift as offensive line coach Walter Wells enters his first year as coordinator.

Wells is keeping many of the spread-option principles WKU has used over the past two years, but he'll add dual-tight end packages and several under-center power sets as well.

The biggest question is at quarterback, where an inexperienced trio — senior Brandon Smith, along with redshirt freshmen Marcus Vasquez and Kawaun Jakes — vie for the job. True freshman Courtney Dalcourt also is expected to compete this fall.

WKU returns its top three running backs — senior Tyrell Hayden (388 yards, three touchdowns in 2008), senior Marell Booker (285 yards) and sophomore Bobby Rainey (259).

Rainey was the team leader in all-purpose yards despite missing the final four games with a knee injury. Shoulder surgery brought an early end to his spring, but coaches are hopeful he'll be ready for fall camp.

Senior Jake Gaebler will lead a receiving corps that returns four of its top five pass catchers. Gaebler, WKU's most consistent offensive performer last season, is just 25 catches short of the school's career record.

The line will be led by senior Cody Hughes, who's been a starter at guard for the past three seasons.

DEFENSE

New coordinator Mike Dietzel — who has been on the staff since 2003 — will take over the defensive reins from head coach David Elson and will continue to implement the 3-4 scheme.

This will be Dietzel's second term as defensive coordinator. He held the position in 2004 before being demoted midway through the 2005 campaign.

The defense will be led by senior outside linebacker Blake Boyd (67 tackles, 3.5 sacks in 2008), a Louisville transfer who has started at WKU since the 2006 season.

WKU's biggest weakness will be along the line. The Hilltoppers return only one player who gained any legitimate experience a year ago — sophomore Jared Clendenin.

The secondary should be led by sophomore safeties Mark Santoro and Ryan Beard — each of whom started for most of last season. Santoro earned the top defensive back award throughout spring drills, while Beard battled through injury and disciplinary issues for most of the spring.

An interesting twist here is the emergence of cornerback Dexter Taylor, who spent much of last year at quarterback.

SPECIAL TEAMS

WKU should have a bevy of solid return men, as Rainey finished with 581 yards of kickoff return yards last season — including a long of 92. Sophomore transfer Antionne Lightfoot showed signs of being a difference-maker this spring.

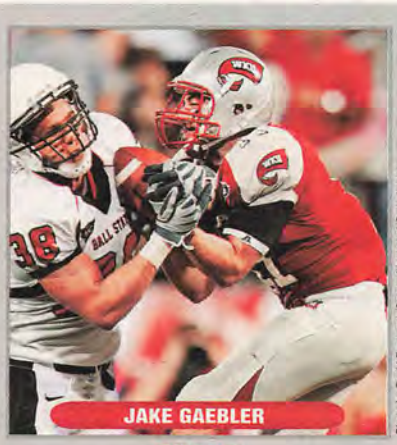
The graduation of kicker Tanner Siewert leaves the job up for grabs, with sophomore Casey Tinius and senior Zac Minturn emerging as the leading candidates. Tinius ended the spring as the team's No. 1, but Minturn holds the overall edge in career experience.

OVERVIEW

Welcome to the clubs: This is WKU's first season as a full-fledged member of both the Football Bowl Subdivision and the Sun Belt Conference.

The Hilltoppers won't have to face quite the gauntlet they did a season ago when they played five of their first six games away from home. But depth and experience will be issues, and the program isn't ready to compete for a league title right away.

WKU signed perhaps its best-ever recruiting class in February, so things are looking up.



JAKE GAEBLER

Photo by David Bergman /Sports Illustrated/Getty Images

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Brandon Smith	6-0	200	Sr.
	Marcus Vasquez	6-2	190	Fr.
RB	Marell Booker	5-9	215	Sr.
	Tyrell Hayden*	**5-10**	**190**	**Sr.**
WR	**Jake Gaebler***	**5-11**	**185**	**Sr.**
	Derrius Brooks	5-10	180	So.
WR	**Quinterrance Cooper***	**6-0**	**185**	**Jr.**
	Dustin Boyer	6-1	190	Jr.
WR	Seth Tamme	6-0	185	Jr.
	Wenquel Graves	5-9	185	Jr.
TE	**Tristan Jones***	**6-3**	**260**	**So.**
	Jack Doyle	6-6	240	Fr.
LT	**Wes Jefferies***	**6-4**	**285**	**So.**
	Adam Smith	6-5	290	Fr.
LG	**Cody Hughes***	**6-1**	**300**	**Sr.**
	Shelley Anthony	6-1	280	So.
C	**Lloyd Pressley***	**6-3**	**290**	**Sr.**
	Luke Stansfield	6-3	275	Fr.
RG	Mychal Patterson	6-3	310	Jr.
	Derrick Elder	6-2	290	Jr.
RT	**Preston King***	**6-4**	**280**	**Jr.**
	Jacob McLaurin	6-4	295	Jr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Bo Adebayo	6-3	240	So.
	Kenny Martin	6-0	265	Fr.
NT	Nick Hartnett	6-0	290	Jr.
	Jamarcus Allen	6-0	265	Fr.
DE	**Jared Clendenin***	**6-3**	**230**	**So.**
	Brandon Whitty	6-2	250	Fr.
LB	**Blake Boyd***	**6-3**	**250**	**Sr.**
	Tyran Golden	6-3	210	Fr.
LB	Mike Gothard	6-1	225	Jr.
	Chuck Franks	6-0	210	Fr.
LB	Taurean Smith	6-1	230	Sr.
	L.J. Harbison	5-11	220	Sr.
LB	**Darvis McBride***	**5-10**	**225**	**Sr.**
	Chris Bullard	6-0	230	Jr.
CB	Dexter Taylor	5-10	185	Jr.
	Trent Calhoun*	**5-10**	**190**	**So.**
CB	**Jihad Morris***	**6-0**	**175**	**Sr.**
	Erik Jones	5-9	175	Jr.
FS	**Mark Santoro***	**6-0**	**195**	**So.**
	Jerrod Babik	5-8	196	Jr.
SS	John Garrett	6-0	190	So.
	Orlando Misaalefua	6-0	200	Jr.

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Casey Tinius	6-0	175	So.
P	**Jeremy Moore***	**6-1**	**190**	**Sr.**

*** Returning Starters in Bold**

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	at Tennessee
Sept. 12	SOUTH FLORIDA
Sept. 19	CENTRAL ARKANSAS
Sept. 26	at Navy
Oct. 10	FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
Oct. 17	LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE
Oct. 24	at Middle Tennessee
Oct. 31	at North Texas
Nov. 7	TROY
Nov. 14	at Louisiana-Monroe
Nov. 28	at Florida Atlantic
Dec. 3	ARKANSAS STATE

2008 Results

(2-10)

L	at Indiana	13-31
W	at Eastern Kentucky	37-13
L	at Alabama	7-41
W	MURRAY STATE	50-9
L	at Kentucky	3-41
L	at Virginia Tech	13-27
L	BALL STATE	7-24
L	FLORIDA ATLANTIC	20-24
L	NORTH TEXAS	40-51
L	at Troy	7-17
L	MIDDLE TENNESSEE	10-21
L	at Florida International	3-27

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	17.5	*
Rushing	143.9	*
Passing	142.2	*
Total	286.1	*

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.2	*
Rushing	162.4	*
Passing	212.8	*
Total	375.2	*

TO Margin	PER GAME	RANK
-1	-.08	*

*(no ranking, as WKU was FBS transitional)

NOTRE DAME FIGHTING IRISH

NATIONAL RANK 37

Independent | Record: 7-6 | Stadium: Notre Dame Stadium (80,795)

Irish in A Box

COACH: Charlie Weis — At Notre Dame and overall: 29-21, 5 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Charlie Weis
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jon Tenuta
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: N/A
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2007
RETURNING STARTERS: 18; 10 offense, 6 defense, kicker, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Jimmy Clausen, RB Armando Allen, WR Michael Floyd, WR Golden Tate, DE Ethan Johnson, LB Brian Smith, CB Robert Blanton, SS Kyle McCarthy
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Notre Dame can pass the ball behind Clausen. The Irish can run six deep at wide receiver and has one of the better receiving tight ends in the country, Kyle Rudolph. The secondary has a chance to be one of the best in the nation.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The lines. The offensive line returns four starters, but has been largely ineffective in run blocking and pass protection the past two seasons. The defensive line has potential, but could have three sophomores starting on opening day. The kicking game is also suspect.

OFFENSE

Quarterback Jimmy Clausen is in his third year as the starter — second full time — and is coming off the best performance of his career in the Hawaii Bowl, completing 22 of 26 passes for 401 yards and five touchdowns.

Now, it's time for him to be a leader and to improve his overall performance. His main focus in the spring was footwork. He watched tape of New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady to learn how he moved in the pocket and established a presence without resorting to scrambling.

Clausen has excellent multiple targets, including sophomore wide receiver Michael Floyd, junior wide receiver Golden Tate and sophomore tight end Kyle Rudolph. Floyd's long arms and vertical leap allow him to make catches most other receivers can't. Tate can create in space.

Armando Allen leads the running game after gaining 585 yards and scoring three touchdowns last year. Joining him in the backfield are Robert Hughes (382 yards, four touchdowns) and James Aldridge (357 yards, three touchdowns).

An experienced line, which returns four starters, gives the Irish hope of improving a stagnant running game. The fifth starter, left tackle Paul Duncan, started 12 games for the Irish in 2007.

DEFENSE

Expect Notre Dame to bring a lot of pressure.

That has always been defensive coordinator Jon Tenuta's style, an approach he used at Georgia Tech when he was known as one of the best blitz-callers and defensive play-callers in the country.

He arrived at Notre Dame after the 2007 season and combined play-calling duties with Corwin Brown last year. This year, with Brown bumped up to associate head coach, it is all Tenuta.

Helping the defense is a strong secondary that returns three full-time starters (safeties Kyle McCarthy and Harrison Smith, and cornerback Raeshon McNeil) and one full-time starter from 2007, Darrin Walls, who missed last season because of personal reasons.

Robert Blanton has been a part-time starter. Walls, McNeil and Blanton all have shutdown capabilities.

Junior Brian Smith leads the linebackers and is the emotional core of the defense. He'll be able to play both inside and outside, giving Tenuta personnel flexibility with senior Toryan Smith, fifth-year senior Scott Smith, superstar freshman Manti Te'o, sophomore Steve Filer and sophomore Darius Fleming.

The line has the biggest questions — and the biggest potential. Sophomore Ethan Johnson could end up being a star at end. Ian Williams is in his third year at tackle, and sophomores Kapron Lewis-Moore and Hafis Williams both made great strides and are likely starters coming out of the spring.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Junior kicker Brandon Walker and senior punter Eric Maust return, as do returners Golden Tate and Armando Allen. The coverage units lose David Bruton to the NFL, but Mike Anello, a walk-on who has become a Lott Trophy candidate, will continue to play on all four special teams as one of the best gunners in the country.

OVERVIEW

Notre Dame should improve its record this season due to a schedule that looks favorable. But for the Irish to start knocking off the tougher teams, they need to rediscover a running game that has been ineffective since Darius Walker left after 2006. That'll come if the offensive line shows aggressiveness for the first time in years. The benchmark game will come against USC on Oct. 17.

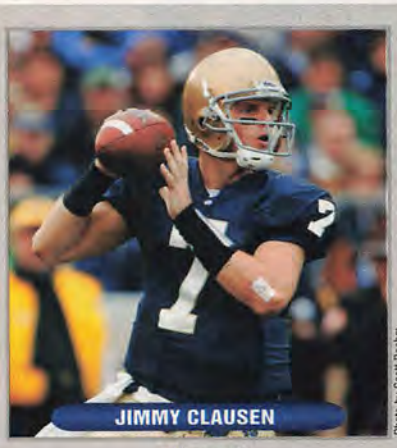

JIMMY CLAUSEN

Photo by Scott Boehm

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Jimmy Clausen***	**6-3**	**217**	**Jr.**
	Dayne Crist	6-4	233	Fr.
RB	**Armando Allen***	**5-10**	**195**	**Jr.**
	Robert Hughes	5-1	237	Jr.
RB	James Aldridge	6-0	255	Sr.
	Steve Paskorz	6-2	235	Jr.
WR	**Michael Floyd***	**6-3**	**215**	**So.**
	Robby Parris	6-3	210	Sr.
WR	**Golden Tate***	**5-11**	**195**	**Jr.**
	Duval Kamara*	**6-5**	**219**	**Jr.**
TE	**Kyle Rudolph***	**6-6**	**258**	**So.**
	Joseph Fauria	6-7	245	So.
LT	Paul Duncan	6-7	308	Sr.
	Matt Romine	6-5	292	Jr.
LG	**Eric Olsen***	**6-4**	**303**	**Sr.**
	Andrew Nuss	6-5	304	Jr.
C	**Dan Wenger***	**6-4**	**302**	**Sr.**
	Braxston Cave	6-3	310	So.
RG	**Chris Stewart***	**6-5**	**337**	**Sr.**
	Trevor Robinson	6-5	306	So.
RT	**Sam Young***	**6-8**	**330**	**Sr.**
	Lane Clelland	6-5	281	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	Kapron Lewis-Moore	6-4	265	So.
	Morrice Richardson	6-2	255	Sr.
DT	Hafis Williams	6-1	295	So.
	Sean Cwynar	6-4	282	So.
DT	**Ian Williams***	**6-2**	**310**	**Jr.**
	Brandon Newman	6-0	310	So.
DE	Ethan Johnson	6-4	275	So.
	Kerry Neal*	**6-2**	**246**	**Jr.**
LB	**Brian Smith***	**6-3**	**245**	**Jr.**
	Steve Filer	6-2	236	So.
LB	Toryan Smith	6-1	244	Sr.
	Manti Te'o	6-2	225	Fr.
LB	Scott Smith	6-4	235	Sr.
	Zeke Motta	6-2	215	Fr.
CB	**Raeshon McNeil***	**6-0**	**190**	**Sr.**
	Jamoris Slaughter	6-0	182	So.
CB	Robert Blanton	6-1	180	So.
	Darrin Walls	6-0	190	Sr.
SS	**Kyle McCarthy***	**6-1**	**203**	**Sr.**
	Sergio Brown	6-2	205	Sr.
FS	**Harrison Smith***	**6-2**	**212**	**Jr.**
	Dan McCarthy	6-2	200	So.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Brandon Walker***	**6-3**	**202**	**Jr.**
P	**Eric Maust***	**6-2**	**177**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	NEVADA
Sept. 12	at Michigan
Sept. 19	MICHIGAN STATE
Sept. 26	at Purdue
Oct. 3	WASHINGTON
Oct. 17	USC
Oct. 24	BOSTON COLLEGE
Oct. 31	vs. Washington State (San Antonio)
Nov. 7	NAVY
Nov. 14	at Pittsburgh
Nov. 21	CONNECTICUT
Nov. 28	at Stanford

2008 Results

	(7-6)	
W	SAN DIEGO STATE	21-13
W	MICHIGAN	35-17
L	at Michigan State	7-23
W	PURDUE	38-21
W	STANFORD	28-21
L	at North Carolina	24-29
W	at Washington	33-7
L	PITTSBURGH (OT)	33-36
L	at Boston College	0-17
W	at Navy	27-21
L	SYRACUSE	23-24
L	at USC	3-38
	Hawaii Bowl	
W	vs. Hawaii	49-21

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.7	67
Rushing	109.7	100
Passing	245.4	34
Total	355.1	65
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	22.2	42
Rushing	134.2	45
Passing	195.7	43
Total	329.9	39
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 3	- 0.23	73

NAVY MIDSHIPMEN

NATIONAL RANK 66

Independent | Record: 8-5 | Stadium: Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium (34,000)

Midshipmen in A Box

COACH: Ken Niumatalolo — At Navy and overall: 8-5, 1 year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ivin Jasper
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Buddy Green
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: None
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2002
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 4 offense, 7 defense, punter
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Ricky Dobbs, OG Curtis Bass, NG Nate Frazier, LB Ross Pospisil, LB Clint Sovie, FS Wyatt Middleton
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Navy returns seven starters and several top reserves from a defense that ranked as the nation's most improved in 2008 in terms of points allowed. Pospisil and Middleton anchor an experienced unit that forced 30 turnovers last season.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Navy graduated its top performer at every offensive skill position. Can FB Alexander Teich provide the inside running that sets the tone for the triple-option? Can Dobbs read defenses and distribute the ball properly? Will Marcus Curry blossom into a breakaway threat at the slot position?

OFFENSE

Ricky Dobbs has been touted as potentially the best quarterback of the current triple-option era since he stepped foot on the Naval Academy campus. Dobbs' time has come. He'll have two seasons as the starter to live up to the hype.

Fans got an early glimpse of Dobbs last season due to injuries that sidelined starter Kaipo-Noa Kaheaku-Enhada and backup Jarod Bryant. Dobbs started only one game and appeared in six others, but he still ranked third on the team with 495 yards rushing and second in scoring with eight touchdowns.

The junior made a spectacular debut, replacing an injured Bryant against SMU and rushing for 224 yards and four touchdowns.

Dobbs is a powerful runner who can break tackles and drag defenders for extra yardage, while also possessing the speed and moves to break long gains. The Georgia native is by far the best passer of the triple-option era, blessed with a strong, accurate arm. Coordinator Ivin Jasper is talking about throwing the ball downfield more.

Navy must replace other top skill-position players, including fullback Eric Kettani, slot back Shun White and receiver Tyree Barnes. There are no proven performers at any of those spots.

Alexander Teich, who won the starting fullback job in the spring, got just seven carries last season. He's smaller than typical Navy fullbacks, but might be quicker and more elusive.

Slot back Bobby Doyle displayed a propensity to make big plays in 2008, scoring three touchdowns and averaging 10.6 yards on 19 carries. But sophomore Marcus Curry might develop into the big-play threat needed at the position.

DEFENSE

Navy allowed 22 points per game last season, and should be even better this season with seven starters and a bevy of backups returning.

Nose guard Nate Frazier is downright dominant at times, taking on double-teams and still making plays. He tied for the team lead with nine tackles for loss.

Jabaree Tuani replaced an injured Michael Walsh at left end five games into the season and wound up being named a second-team Freshman All-American by two publications. Quick and agile, Tuani had 42 tackles, nine for loss, and forced a fumble in each of his first three starts.

Inside linebacker Ross Pospisil returns after recording a team-high 106 tackles. Named defensive captain during the spring, Pospisil never takes a play off and is a solid pass defender.

Solid depth at inside linebacker enabled Navy to move standout senior Clint Sovie to outside linebacker.

Safety Wyatt Middleton, a versatile player with a nose for the football, might be Navy's best defender.

SPECIAL TEAMS

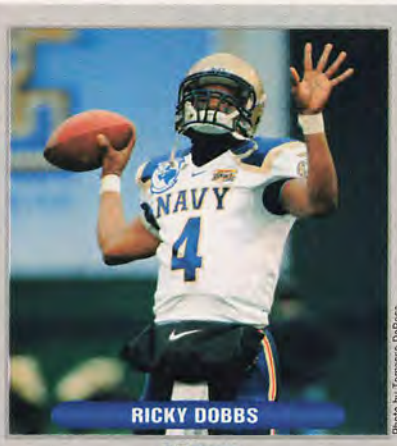
Kyle Delahooke was superb in his first season at punter, averaging 41.6 yards. He has been working to improve his hang time and directional punting.

Navy lost consistent kicker Matt Harmon, but has a talented replacement in sophomore Jon Teague, who handled kickoff duties in 2008. Teague has an extremely strong leg, but needs to work on accuracy and consistency.

OVERVIEW

Coach Ken Niumatalolo kept the ball rolling in the post-Paul Johnson era, as Navy posted its sixth straight winning season and captured the coveted Commander-in-Chief's Trophy for the sixth straight year.

Another bowl season is expected for the Midshipmen, who will be seeking to extend their streak of 13 consecutive wins over their service academy rivals. But the schedule is tougher than ever as eight opponents, including Ohio State, played in bowl games a year ago.



RICKY DOBBS

Photo by Tomasso DeRosa

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	Ricky Dobbs	6-1	194	Jr.
	Kriss Proctor	6-1	175	So.
FB	Alexander Teich	6-0	200	So.
	Kevin Campbell	5-11	193	Sr.
SB	**Cory Finnerty***	**5-10**	**190**	**Sr.**
	Bobby Doyle	5-11	195	Sr.
SB	Marcus Curry	5-11	207	So.
	Andre Byrd	5-7	157	Jr.
WR	Mario Washington	6-0	184	Jr.
	Greg Jones	5-10	181	Jr.
WR	Mike Schupp	5-10	180	Jr.
	Nick Henderson	6-4	212	Sr.
LT	**Jeff Battipaglia***	**6-4**	**260**	**Jr.**
	Austin Milke	6-3	265	Sr.
LG	Osei Asante	6-1	264	Sr.
	Andy Lark	6-0	289	Sr.
C	Brady DeMell	6-3	295	So.
	Patrick Snow	6-1	250	Jr.
RG	**Curtis Bass***	**6-1**	**266**	**Sr.**
	David Hong	6-3	290	So.
RT	**Matt Malloy***	**6-3**	**280**	**Jr.**
	John Dowd	6-4	240	So.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Jabaree Tuani***	**6-1**	**265**	**So.**
	Michael Walsh	6-2	257	Sr.
NG	**Nate Frazier***	**6-3**	**287**	**Sr.**
	Chase Burge	6-4	270	Jr.
DE	**Matt Nechak***	**6-4**	**249**	**Sr.**
	Jordan Stephens	6-4	263	Sr.
LB	**Clint Sovie***	**5-11**	**210**	**Sr.**
	Ram Vela*	**5-9**	**193**	**Sr.**
LB	**Ross Pospisil***	**6-0**	**223**	**Sr.**
	Tyler Simmons	6-3	230	Jr.
LB	Tony Haberer	6-1	225	Sr.
	Caleb King	6-0	220	So.
LB	Craig Schaefer	6-2	222	Sr.
	Jerry Hauburger	6-0	218	Jr.
CB	Blake Carter	5-11	185	Sr.
	John Angelo	5-9	176	Jr.
CB	Kevin Edwards	6-2	173	Jr.
	Darius Terry	5-7	168	Sr.
SS	Kwesi Mitchell	5-10	191	So.
	Jarred Shannon	6-0	197	So.
FS	**Wyatt Middleton***	**6-0**	**192**	**Jr.**
	Jesse Iwuji	6-1	182	Sr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	Jon Teague	6-3	195	So.
P	**Kyle Delahooke***	**6-1**	**202**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	at Ohio State
Sept. 12	LOUISIANA TECH
Sept. 19	at Pittsburgh
Sept. 26	WESTERN KENTUCKY
Oct. 3	AIR FORCE
Oct. 10	at Rice
Oct. 17	at SMU
Oct. 24	WAKE FOREST
Oct. 31	TEMPLE
Nov. 7	at Notre Dame
Nov. 14	DELAWARE
Nov. 28	at Hawaii
Dec. 12	vs. Army (Philadelphia)

2008 Results

		(8-5)
W	TOWSON	41-13
L	at Ball State	23-35
L	at Duke	31-41
W	RUTGERS	23-21
W	at Wake Forest	24-17
W	at Air Force	33-27
L	PITTSBURGH	21-42
W	SMU	34-7
W	TEMPLE	33-27
L	NOTRE DAME	21-27
W	at Northern Illinois	16-0
W	vs. Army (Philadelphia)	34-0
	EagleBank Bowl	
L	vs. Wake Forest	19-29

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.2	48
Rushing	292.4	1
Passing	60.9	118
Total	353.3	66
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	22.0	40
Rushing	134.8	46
Passing	211.8	64
Total	346.7	53
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 15	+ 1.15	7

ARMY BLACK KNIGHTS

NATIONAL RANK 112

Independent | Record: 3-9 | Stadium: Michie (40,000)

Black Knights in A Box

COACH: Rich Ellerson — At Army: 1st year; overall: 60-41, 9 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ian Shields
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Chris Smeland, Payam Saadat
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: None
LAST BOWL: 1996, Independence
RETURNING STARTERS: 11, 3 offense, 7 defense, kicker
PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Chip Bowden, SB Patrick Mealy, WR Ali Villanueva, DE Josh McNary, DT Victor Ugenyi, LB Stephen Anderson, FS Donovan Travis
PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Ellerson is one of the game's under-appreciated minds. His staff's creativity will be seen on both sides of the ball. Army's defensive line, the team's most experienced and deepest unit, will be bolstered by the return of tackle Mike Gann, who missed the last nine games with a knee injury.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: A competitive home schedule (Rutgers, Vanderbilt, Ball State and Duke) will make it difficult to bring West Point its first winning season since 1996. Will Army's lighter, inexperienced O-line hold up to the grind of a 12-game schedule?

OFFENSE

New head coach Rich Ellerson brings in a true triple-option attack from Cal Poly, and he likes to keep defenses guessing with misdirection and trickery.

Last season, Army was too predictable with fullback dives and quarterback keepers. And the passing game wasn't consistent enough to keep defenses honest.

Chip Bowden, who started the last nine games despite playing through a series of nagging injuries, is back at quarterback. Max Jenkins pushed him for playing time in the spring. Prep school quarterback Trent Steelman is expected to be in the mix as soon as he arrives on post.

Bowden is the team's top returning rusher (572 yards). Army needs someone else to step up, and slot back Patrick Mealy could be the man. Mealy showed promise in 2007, but a hamstring injury limited him to 18 carries in 2008. He has the speed to get outside and the power to run over defenders.

Army has to replace Collin Mooney, a bruising fullback who set an academy single-season rushing record (1,339 yards). CeDarius Williams, who hasn't seen any game action, has a slot back's build and a fullback's mentality.

Ellerson made several position changes in the spring. The most notable was switching 6-10, 283-pound starting left tackle Ali Villanueva to wide receiver.

Coaches are banking that Villanueva's size will give Army an unstoppable red-zone threat. He's essentially a sixth offensive lineman, and his blocking could be critical on screens to the shifty Damion Hunter.

DEFENSE

Army's defense kept the team in games and ranked 48th nationally last season. There's plenty of talent returning with a different look. Ellerson scrapped the 4-3 for the double-eagle flex, an attacking defense he helped popularize in the 1990s with Arizona's "Desert Swarm."

Army forced only 15 turnovers last season. This defense will be more opportunistic and quicker to the ball.

Victor Ugenyi, who started every game at end last season, moves inside and needs to be a playmaker for the change to work. Rush end Josh McNary, who led Army with 12 tackles for a loss and 4.5 sacks, will create matchup problems with his speed.

Hard-hitting linebacker Stephen Anderson, who moved from the outside to the inside, was one of the nation's best at forcing fumbles last year.

Free safety Donovan Travis, Army's best athlete, will have more freedom in this defense. Mario Hill is the best cover man of the four cornerbacks who saw action last year.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Placekicker Matt Campbell is consistent, but he could improve on kickoffs. He had only three touchbacks in 2008. Jonathan Bulls and Kolin Walk will continue to battle as Army's new punter in the fall.

Ellerson will coach special teams and will place a major emphasis on improving the return game. Army ranked 102nd in kick returns and 110th in punt returns. Damion Hunter, who touched the ball only 11 times last season, has game-breaking speed and is the ideal candidate to handle both jobs.

OVERVIEW

Army fans have suffered through 12 consecutive losing seasons and have seen six head coaches in the past 11 years. A turnaround isn't happening overnight. But Ellerson finally brings stability and innovation, which has been lacking recently.

Army hasn't won more than three games since 2005. Four to five wins would be a step in the right direction.

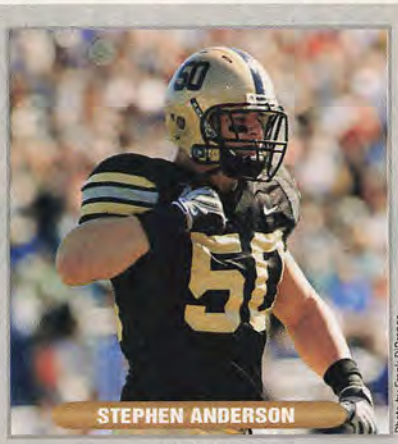

STEPHEN ANDERSON

Photo by Frank DiBrango

Offense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
QB	**Chip Bowden***	**6-0**	**211**	**Jr.**
	Max Jenkins	6-2	197	So.
FB	CeDarius Williams	5-11	203	So.
	Kingsley Ehie	5-10	221	Jr.
SB	Patrick Mealy	5-8	203	Jr.
	George Fletcher	5-9	195	So.
SB	Ian Smith	5-8	180	Sr.
	Jameson Carter	5-11	180	Jr.
WR	Damion Hunter	5-10	166	Sr.
	Austin Barr	6-4	195	So.
WR	**Ali Villanueva***	**6-10**	**283**	**Sr.**
	Davyd Brooks	6-3	200	So.
LT	Mike McDermott	6-7	248	So.
	Ernie Bernal	6-3	249	Sr.
LG	Mikel Weich	6-3	277	Jr.
	David Sprague	6-3	286	Sr.
C	Zachary Peterson	6-1	267	Jr.
	Anees Merzi	6-3	276	Jr.
RG	Seth Reed	6-1	266	Jr.
	Joe Bailey	6-2	283	So.
RT	**Jason Johnson***	**6-3**	**251**	**Sr.**
	Kentic Lull	6-3	258	Sr.

Defense

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
DE	**Josh McNary***	**6-1**	**225**	**Jr.**
	Bradley Marren	6-1	226	Sr.
LT	**Victor Ugenyi***	**6-3**	**262**	**Sr.**
	Fritz Bentler*	**6-3**	**248**	**Sr.**
RT	Mike Gann	6-2	270	Jr.
	Chris Swain	6-3	252	So.
DE	Marcus Hilton	6-0	247	Jr.
	Carson Homme	6-4	243	Jr.
LB	Andrew Rodriguez	6-3	210	So.
	Chad Thayer	6-0	198	Sr.
LB	**Stephen Anderson***	**5-10**	**219**	**Jr.**
	Andre Shinda	6-0	195	So.
LB	Desmond Lamb	6-2	193	Jr.
	Donnie Dixon	6-0	196	Jr.
CB	**Mario Hill***	**6-0**	**175**	**Sr.**
	Antuan Aaron*	**5-9**	**183**	**So.**
CB	Richard King	5-11	190	Jr.
	Jordan Trimble	5-10	181	Jr.
SS	Steven Erzinger	6-1	215	So.
	Sean Westphal	6-1	205	Jr.
FS	**Donovan Travis***	**6-1**	**187**	**Jr.**
	Chase Prasnicki	6-1	212	Sr.

Special Teams

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.
K	**Matt Campbell***	**5-9**	**195**	**Jr.**
P	Jonathan Bulls	6-1	217	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2009 Schedule

Sept. 5	at Eastern Michigan
Sept. 12	DUKE
Sept. 19	BALL STATE
Sept. 26	at Iowa State
Oct. 3	TULANE
Oct. 10	VANDERBILT
Oct. 17	at Temple
Oct. 23	RUTGERS
Nov. 7	at Air Force
Nov. 14	VMI
Nov. 21	at North Texas
Dec. 12	vs. Navy (Philadelphia, Pa.)

2008 Results

(3-9)

L	TEMPLE	7-35
L	NEW HAMPSHIRE	10-28
L	AKRON	3-22
L	at Texas A&M	17-21
W	at Tulane	44-13
W	EASTERN MICHIGAN	17-13
L	at Buffalo	24-27
W	LOUISIANA TECH	14-7
L	AIR FORCE	7-16
L	at Rice	31-38
L	at Rutgers	3-30
L	vs. Navy	0-34

2008 Rankings

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	14.75	116
Rushing	241.4	9
Passing	46.3	119
Total	287.7	110
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	23.7	51
Rushing	145.1	70
Passing	194.4	42
Total	339.5	48
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 14	- 1.17	114

FANTASY FOOTBALL ... NOT JUST FOR THE PROS ANYMORE!

BY BRIAN MCDONALD
CFFINSIDER.COM

QUARTERBACKS

1. Case Keenum, Houston
2. Tim Tebow, Florida
3. Taylor Potts, Texas Tech
4. Colt McCoy, Texas
5. Sam Bradford, Oklahoma
6. Jacob Bower, Tulsa
7. Zac Robinson, Oklahoma State
8. Colin Kaepernick, Nevada
9. Trevor Vittatoe, UTEP
10. Dan LeFevour, Central Michigan
11. Todd Reesing, Kansas
12. Max Hall, BYU
13. Robert Griffin, Baylor
14. Tony Pike, Cincinnati
15. Austin Davis, Southern Miss.
16. Bo Levi Mitchell, SMU
17. Kellen Moore, Boise State
18. Tim Hiller, Western Michigan
19. Jevan Snead, Mississippi
20. Greg Alexander, Hawaii
21. Jimmy Clausen, Notre Dame
22. Tyler Sheehan, Bowling Green
23. Terrelle Pryor, Ohio State
24. Jarrett Brown, West Virginia
25. Daryll Clark, Penn State
26. Jake Locker, Washington
27. Juice Williams, Illinois
28. Omar Clayton, UNLV
29. Ryan Mallett, Arkansas
30. Jeremiah Masoli, Oregon
31. Russell Wilson, NC State
32. Rusty Smith, Florida Atlantic
33. Jerrod Johnson, Texas A&M
34. Austen Arnaud, Iowa State
35. Aaron Corp, USC

* Tate Forcier (Fr), Michigan
* Riley Dodge, North Texas
* Jacory Harris, Miami
* Mike Kafka, Northwestern
* Karsten Sween, Wyoming

RUNNING BACKS

1. LeGarrette Blount, Oregon
2. André Anderson, Tulane
3. Kendall Hunter, Oklahoma State
4. Jacquizz Rodgers, Oregon State
5. Jahvid Best, California
6. MiQuale Lewis, Ball State
7. James Starks, Buffalo
8. Bryce Beall, Houston
9. Charles Scott, LSU
10. Matt Asiata, Utah
11. John Clay, Wisconsin
12. Mark Ingram, Alabama
13. DeMarco Murray, Oklahoma
14. Chris Brown, Oklahoma
15. Michael Smith, Arkansas
16. Brandon Minor, Michigan
17. Charles Clay, Tulsa
18. Eugene Jarvis, Kent State
19. Harvey Unga, BYU
20. Evan Royster, Penn State
21. Derrick Washington, Missouri
22. C.J. Spiller, Clemson
23. Vai Taua, Nevada
24. Jonathan Dwyer, Georgia Tech
25. Damion Fletcher, Southern Miss.
26. Jake Sharp, Kansas
27. Baron Batch, Texas Tech
28. Roy Helu Jr., Nebraska
29. Daniel Porter, Louisiana Tech
30. Darren Evans, Virginia Tech
31. Jeremy Avery, Boise State
32. DuJuan Harris, Troy
33. Toby Gerhart, Stanford
34. Da'Rel Scott, Maryland
35. Ryan Mathews, Fresno State

* Jarvis Giles (Fr), South Carolina
* Edwin Baker (Fr), Michigan State
* Jewel Hampton, Iowa
* Jermaine Thomas, Florida State
* Montario Hardesty, Tennessee

WIDE RECEIVERS

1. Dez Bryant, Oklahoma State
2. Dezmon Briscoe, Kansas
3. DeAndre Brown, Southern Miss.
4. Jordan Shipley, Texas
5. Aldrick Robinson, SMU
6. Damaris Johnson, Tulsa
7. Emmanuel Sanders, SMU
8. Ryan Broyles, Oklahoma
9. Mardy Gilyard, Cincinnati
10. Jerrel Jernigan, Troy
11. Tyron Carrier, Houston
12. T.Y. Hilton, Florida International
13. Jeff Moturi, UTEP
14. Kris Adams, UTEP
15. Naaman Roosevelt, Buffalo
16. Antonio Brown, Central Michigan
17. James Rodgers, Oregon State
18. Michael Floyd, Notre Dame
19. Golden Tate, Notre Dame
20. Detron Lewis, Texas Tech
21. Dexter McCluster, Mississippi
22. Kerry Meier, Kansas
23. Damian Williams, Southern Cal
24. Brandon Banks, Kansas State
25. A.J. Green, Georgia
26. Dion Morton, Colorado State
27. Cortez Gent, Florida Atlantic
28. Ryan Wolfe, UNLV
29. Eric Decker, Minnesota
30. Brandon LaFell, LSU
31. Arrelious Benn, Illinois
32. Juan Nunez, Western Michigan
33. Slick Shelley, Tulsa
34. Austin Pettis, Boise State
35. Julio Jones, Alabama

* Kevin Jurovich, San Jose State
* Adron Tennell, Oklahoma
* Lyle Leong, Texas Tech
* Jamar Howard (JC), Cincinnati
* Dwight Jones, North Carolina

As fantasy sports have exploded, so too has the popularity of college football, thus it seems only natural that we've recently witnessed the collision of these two passions. And the fan that follows recruiting without rationality, roots without reservation, and tailgates without trepidation has discovered the joy of watching Colt McCoy lead his fantasy squad to a hard-fought victory over Steve in Human Resources. College fantasy football is here to stay, and countless players have found it can be as simple or involved as they'd like it to be.

The beauty of college fantasy football is its flexibility. Conference-only leagues are tailor made for you and your tailgate crew. BCS-only leagues are great for the group that spends Saturdays watching all the national games, and those leagues that incorporate all 120 members of the Football Bowl Subdivision are ideal for those that will watch college football anywhere, anytime, no matter who is playing And no matter what the league format, college fantasy footballers, like *Lindy's* NCAA Annuals, celebrate all that is great about our favorite collegiate pastime.

The 2009 season promises to pick up right where the 2008 campaign concluded ... with offensive fireworks galore. Stars expected to make the jump to superstardom, dynamic talents like LeGarrette Blount, DeMarco Murray and DeAndre Brown join fantasy stalwarts Tim Tebow, Sam Bradford, Dez Bryant and many others across the college fantasy football landscape. And rest assured this blending of young and younger college stars will again lead to an unpredictable draft day this August.

Whether a novice player or a seasoned vet that rode Ron Dayne to fantasy glory, you have an understanding of the challenge presented while building a draft board comprised of upperclassmen stars and youngsters on the cusp of greatness. And no owner should enter his draft without the proper preparation. The following player rankings will have you well on your way to 2009 college fantasy football glory.

For the most updated player rankings see CFFinsider.com.

TIGHT ENDS

1. Rob Gronkowski, Arizona
2. Jermaine Gresham, Oklahoma
3. Dennis Pitta, BYU
4. Cody Slate, Marshall
5. Jason Harmon, Florida Atlantic
6. D.J. Williams, Arkansas
7. Aaron Hernandez, Florida
8. Garrett Graham, Wisconsin
9. Andrew Jones, Missouri
10. Mike McNeill, Nebraska

* Ladarius Green, La-Lafayette
* Dion Sims (Fr), Michigan State
* Kyle Nelson, New Mexico State
* Kyle Adams, Purdue
* Taylor Wardlow, Rice

KICKERS

1. Dan Bailey, Oklahoma State
2. Jimmy Stevens, Oklahoma
3. Jonathan Phillips, Florida
4. Leigh Tiffin, Alabama
5. Brett Swenson, Michigan State
6. Hunter Lawrence, Texas
7. Joshua Shene, Mississippi
8. Sam Glusman, Troy
9. Kyle Brotzman, Boise State
10. Ian McGarvey, Ball State

* Dave Teggart, Connecticut
* Matt Williams, Texas Tech
* Kevin Fitzpatrick, Tulsa
* Logan Barrett, UTEP
* Nick Rhodes, Nevada

DEFENSE

1. Florida
2. Alabama
3. TCU
4. Virginia Tech
5. Mississippi
6. Penn State
7. Utah
8. Ohio State
9. Iowa
10. South Florida

* North Carolina
* West Virginia
* Georgia Tech
* Auburn
* Michigan

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Sample of player salaries.
For a complete list, please visit **CollegeSalaryCap.com**

PICK 1

QUARTERBACKS	Team	$$$
Bradford, Sam	Okla	20.0
McCoy, Colt	Texas	19.3
Tebow, Tim	Florida	18.8
Reesing, Todd	Kansas	18.3
Robinson, Zach	Okla St.	17.8
Potts, Taylor	Texas Tech	17.5
Snead, Jevan	Miss	17.4
Griffin, Robert	Baylor	17.2
Pike, Tony	Cincinnati	17.0
Pryor, Terrelle	Ohio St.	16.9
Clausen, Jimmy	Notre Dame	16.7
Locker, Jake	Wash	16.5
Williams, Juice	Illinois	16.2
Masoli, Jeremiah	Oregon	16.0
Wilson, Russell	NC State	15.9
...more QBs available online		...

PICK 3

RECEIVERS	Team	$$$
Bryant, Dez	Okla St.	14.0
Briscoe, Dezmon	Kansas	13.8
Shipley, Jordan	Texas	13.2
Broyles, Ryan	Okla	12.5
Gilyard, Mardy	Cincinnati	12.2
Lewis, Detron	Texas Tech	12.0
Rodgers, James	Oregon St.	11.9
Tate, Golden	Notre Dame	11.7
McCluster, Dexter	Miss	11.4
Decker, Eric	Minnesota	11.2
Floyd, Michael	Notre Dame	11.1
Jones, Julio	Alabama	10.9
Meier, Kerry	Kansas	10.7
Green, A.J.	Georgia	10.4
Benn, Arrelious	Illinois	10.2
...more WRs available online		...

PICK 3

RUNNING BACKS	Team	$$$
Best, Javhid	Cal	16.5
Rodgers, Jacquizz	Oregon St.	16.3
Blount, LeGarrette	Oregon	15.8
Hunter, Kendall	Okla St.	15.6
Murray, DeMarco	Okla	15.4
Smith, Michael	Arkansas	15.2
Brown, Chris	Okla	15.1
Scott, Charles	LSU	14.9
Royster, Evan	Penn St.	14.6
Clay, John	Wisconsin	14.5
Minor, Brandon	Mich	14.3
Dwyer, Jonathan	Georgia Tech	14.1
Spiller, C.J.	Clemson	13.8
Ingram, Mark	Alabama	13.5
Wash, Derrick	Missouri	13.2
...more RBs available online		...

PICK 1

KICKERS	Team	$$$
Bailey, Dan	Okla St.	8.0
Stevens, Jimmy	Okla	7.7
Phillips, Jonathan	Florida	7.5
Tiffin, Leigh	Alabama	7.4
Swenson, Brett	Mich St.	7.0
Lawrence, Hunter	Texas	6.8
Shene, Joshua	Miss	6.4
Weber, Thomas	Arizona St.	6.3
Henery, Alex	Nebraska	6.2
Bosher, Matt	Miami	6.1
Teggart, Dave	UConn	6.1
Branstetter, Jacob	Kansas	6.0
Welch, Philip	Wisconsin	5.9
Mahoney, Grant	Iowa St.	5.7
Eller, Matt	Illinois	5.5
...more Ks available online		...

PICK 1

DEFENSE/SPECIAL TEAM

Choose from any of the 66 BCS teams. See website for full list.

PICK 1

FLEX POSITION

Pick any player from any position, no defense/special teams

Check the website for a complete up-to-date list of players.

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Wrangler

ACC

BOSTON COLLEGE
Sept. 5 NORTHEASTERN
Sept. 12 KENT STATE
Sept. 19 at Clemson
Sept. 26 WAKE FOREST
Oct. 3 FLORIDA STATE
Oct. 10 at Virginia Tech
Oct. 17 NC STATE
Oct. 24 at Notre Dame
Oct. 31 CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Nov. 14 at Virginia
Nov. 21 NORTH CAROLINA
Nov. 28 at Maryland

CLEMSON
Sept. 5 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Sept. 10 at Georgia Tech
Sept. 19 BOSTON COLLEGE
Sept. 26 TCU
Oct. 3 at Maryland
Oct. 17 WAKE FOREST
Oct. 24 at Miami
Oct. 31 COASTAL CAROLINA
Nov. 7 FLORIDA STATE
Nov. 14 at NC State
Nov. 21 VIRGINIA
Nov. 28 at South Carolina

DUKE
Sept. 5 RICHMOND
Sept. 12 at Army
Sept. 19 at Kansas
Sept. 26 N.C. CENTRAL
Oct. 3 VIRGINIA TECH
Oct. 10 at NC State
Oct. 24 MARYLAND
Oct. 31 at Virginia
Nov. 7 at North Carolina
Nov. 14 GEORGIA TECH
Nov. 21 at Miami
Nov. 28 WAKE FOREST

FLORIDA STATE
Sept. 7 MIAMI
Sept. 12 JACKSONVILLE STATE
Sept. 19 at BYU
Sept. 26 SOUTH FLORIDA
Oct. 3 at Boston College
Oct. 10 GEORGIA TECH
Oct. 22 at North Carolina
Oct. 31 NC STATE
Nov. 7 at Clemson
Nov. 14 at Wake Forest
Nov. 21 MARYLAND
Nov. 28 at Florida

GEORGIA TECH
Sept. 5 JACKSONVILLE STATE
Sept. 10 CLEMSON
Sept. 17 at Miami
Sept. 26 NORTH CAROLINA
Oct. 3 at Mississippi State
Oct. 10 at Florida State
Oct. 17 VIRGINIA TECH
Oct. 24 at Virginia
Oct. 31 at Vanderbilt
Nov. 7 WAKE FOREST
Nov. 14 at Duke
Nov. 28 GEORGIA

MARYLAND
Sept. 5 at California
Sept. 12 JAMES MADISON
Sept. 19 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Sept. 26 RUTGERS
Oct. 3 CLEMSON
Oct. 10 at Wake Forest
Oct. 17 VIRGINIA
Oct. 24 at Duke
Nov. 7 at NC State
Nov. 14 VIRGINIA TECH
Nov. 21 at Florida State
Nov. 28 BOSTON COLLEGE

MIAMI (FL)
Sept. 7 at Florida State
Sept. 17 GEORGIA TECH
Sept. 26 at Virginia Tech
Oct. 3 OKLAHOMA
Oct. 10 FLORIDA A&M
Oct. 17 at UCF
Oct. 24 CLEMSON
Oct. 31 at Wake Forest
Nov. 7 VIRGINIA
Nov. 14 at North Carolina
Nov. 21 DUKE
Nov. 28 South Florida

NORTH CAROLINA
Sept. 5 THE CITADEL
Sept. 12 at Connecticut
Sept. 19 EAST CAROLINA
Sept. 26 at Georgia Tech
Oct. 3 VIRGINIA
Oct. 10 GEORGIA SOUTHERN
Oct. 22 FLORIDA STATE
Oct. 29 at Virginia Tech
Nov. 7 DUKE
Nov. 14 MIAMI
Nov. 21 at Boston College
Nov. 28 at NC State

NC STATE
Sept. 3 SOUTH CAROLINA
Sept. 12 MURRAY STATE
Sept. 19 GARDNER-WEBB
Sept. 26 PITTSBURGH
Oct. 3 at Wake Forest
Oct. 10 DUKE
Oct. 17 at Boston College
Oct. 31 at Florida State
Nov. 7 MARYLAND
Nov. 14 CLEMSON
Nov. 21 at Virginia Tech
Nov. 28 NORTH CAROLINA

VIRGINIA
Sept. 5 WILLIAM & MARY
Sept. 12 TCU
Sept. 19 at Southern Mississippi
Oct. 3 at North Carolina
Oct. 10 INDIANA
Oct. 17 at Maryland
Oct. 24 GEORGIA TECH
Oct. 31 DUKE
Nov. 7 at Miami
Nov. 14 BOSTON COLLEGE
Nov. 21 at Clemson
Nov. 28 VIRGINIA TECH

VIRGINIA TECH
Sept. 5 vs. Alabama (Atlanta)
Sept. 12 MARSHALL
Sept 19 NEBRASKA
Sept. 26 MIAMI
Oct. 3 at Duke
Oct. 10 BOSTON COLLEGE
Oct. 17 at Georgia Tech
Oct. 29 NORTH CAROLINA
Nov. 5 at East Carolina
Nov. 14 at Maryland
Nov. 21 NC STATE
Nov. 28 at Virginia

WAKE FOREST
Sept. 5 BAYLOR
Sept. 12 STANFORD
Sept. 19 ELON
Sept. 26 at Boston College
Oct. 3 NC STATE
Oct. 10 MARYLAND
Oct. 17 at Clemson
Oct. 24 at Navy
Oct. 31 MIAMI
Nov. 7 at Georgia Tech
Nov. 14 FLORIDA STATE
Nov. 28 at Duke

BIG EAST

CINCINNATI
Sept. 7 at Rutgers
Sept. 12 S.E. MISSOURI STATE
Sept. 19 at Oregon State
Sept. 26 FRESNO STATE
Oct. 3 at Miami (OH)
Oct. 15 at South Florida
Oct. 24 LOUISVILLE
Oct. 31 at Syracuse
Nov. 7 CONNECTICUT
Nov. 13 WEST VIRGINIA
Nov. 27 ILLINOIS
Dec. 5 at Pittsburgh

CONNECTICUT
Sept. 5 at Ohio
Sept. 12 NORTH CAROLINA
Sept. 19 at Baylor
Sept. 26 RHODE ISLAND
Oct. 10 at Pittsburgh
Oct. 17 LOUISVILLE
Oct. 24 at West Virginia
Oct. 31 RUTGERS
Nov. 7 at Cincinnati
Nov. 21 at Notre Dame
Nov. 28 SYRACUSE
Dec. 5 SOUTH FLORIDA

LOUISVILLE
Sept. 5 INDIANA STATE
Sept. 19 at Kentucky
Sept. 26 at Utah
Oct. 2 PITTSBURGH
Oct. 10 SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI
Oct. 17 at Connecticut
Oct. 24 at Cincinnati
Oct. 31 ARKANSAS STATE
Nov. 7 at West Virginia
Nov. 14 SYRACUSE
Nov. 21 at South Florida
Nov. 27 RUTGERS

PITTSBURGH
Sept. 5 YOUNGSTOWN STATE
Sept. 12 at Buffalo
Sept. 19 NAVY
Sept. 26 at North Carolina State
Oct. 2 at Louisville
Oct. 10 CONNECTICUT
Oct. 16 at Rutgers
Oct. 24 SOUTH FLORIDA
Nov. 7 SYRACUSE
Nov. 14 NOTRE DAME
Nov. 27 at West Virginia
Dec. 5 CINCINNATI

RUTGERS
Sept. 7 CINCINNATI
Sept. 12 HOWARD
Sept. 19 FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
Sept. 26 at Maryland
Oct. 3 TEXAS SOUTHERN
Oct. 16 PITTSBURGH
Oct. 23 at Army
Oct. 31 at Connecticut
Nov. 12 SOUTH FLORIDA
Nov. 21 at Syracuse
Nov. 27 at Louisville
Dec. 5 WEST VIRGINIA

SOUTH FLORIDA
Sept. 5 WOFFORD
Sept. 12 at Western Kentucky
Sept. 19 CHARLESTON SOUTHERN
Sept. 26 at Florida State
Oct. 3 at Syracuse
Oct. 15 CINCINNATI
Oct. 24 at Pittsburgh
Oct. 30 WEST VIRGINIA
Nov. 12 at Rutgers
Nov. 21 LOUISVILLE
Nov. 28 MIAMI
Dec. 5 at Connecticut

SYRACUSE
Sept. 5 MINNESOTA
Sept. 12 at Penn State
Sept. 19 NORTHWESTERN
Sept. 26 MAINE
Oct. 3 SOUTH FLORIDA
Oct. 10 WEST VIRGINIA
Oct. 24 AKRON
Oct. 31 CINCINNATI
Nov. 7 at Pittsburgh
Nov. 14 at Louisville
Nov. 21 RUTGERS
Nov. 28 at Connecticut

WEST VIRGINIA
Sept. 5 LIBERTY
Sept. 12 EAST CAROLINA
Sept. 19 at Auburn
Oct. 1 COLORADO
Oct. 10 at Syracuse
Oct. 17 MARSHALL
Oct. 24 CONNECTICUT
Oct. 30 at South Florida
Nov. 7 LOUISVILLE
Nov. 13 at Cincinnati
Nov. 27 PITTSBURGH
Dec. 5 at Rutgers

BIG TEN

ILLINOIS
Sept. 5 vs. Missouri (St. Louis)
Sept. 12 ILLINOIS STATE
Sept. 26 at Ohio State
Oct. 3 PENN STATE
Oct. 10 MICHIGAN STATE
Oct. 17 at Indiana
Oct. 24 at Purdue
Oct. 31 MICHIGAN
Nov. 7 at Minnesota
Nov. 14 NORTHWESTERN
Nov. 27 at Cincinnati
Dec. 5 FRESNO STATE

INDIANA
Sept. 3 EASTERN KENTUCKY
Sept. 12 WESTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 19 at Akron
Sept. 26 at Michigan
Oct. 3 OHIO STATE
Oct. 10 at Virginia
Oct. 17 ILLINOIS
Oct. 24 at Northwestern
Oct. 31 at Iowa
Nov. 7 WISCONSIN
Nov. 14 at Penn State
Nov. 21 PURDUE

IOWA
Sept. 5 NORTHERN IOWA
Sept. 12 at Iowa State
Sept. 19 ARIZONA
Sept. 26 at Penn State
Oct. 3 ARKANSAS STATE
Oct. 10 MICHIGAN
Oct. 17 at Wisconsin
Oct. 24 at Michigan State
Oct. 31 INDIANA
Nov. 7 NORTHWESTERN
Nov. 14 at Ohio State
Nov. 21 MINNESOTA

MICHIGAN
Sept. 5 WESTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 12 NOTRE DAME
Sept. 19 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 26 INDIANA
Oct. 3 at Michigan State
Oct. 10 at Iowa
Oct. 17 DELAWARE STATE
Oct. 24 PENN STATE
Oct. 31 at Illinois
Nov. 7 PURDUE
Nov. 14 at Wisconsin
Nov. 21 OHIO STATE

MICHIGAN STATE
Sept. 5 MONTANA STATE
Sept. 12 CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Sept. 19 at Notre Dame
Sept. 26 at Wisconsin
Oct. 3 MICHIGAN
Oct. 10 at Illinois
Oct. 17 NORTHWESTERN
Oct. 24 IOWA
Oct. 31 at Minnesota
Nov. 7 WESTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 14 at Purdue
Nov. 21 PENN STATE

MINNESOTA
Sept. 5 at Syracuse
Sept. 12 AIR FORCE
Sept. 19 CALIFORNIA
Sept. 26 at Northwestern
Oct. 3 WISCONSIN
Oct. 10 PURDUE
Oct. 17 at Penn State
Oct. 24 at Ohio State
Oct. 31 MICHIGAN STATE
Nov. 7 ILLINOIS
Nov. 14 SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
Nov. 21 at Iowa

NORTHWESTERN
Sept. 5 TOWSON
Sept. 12 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 19 at Syracuse
Sept. 26 MINNESOTA
Oct. 3 at Purdue
Oct. 10 MIAMI (OH)
Oct. 17 at Michigan State
Oct. 24 INDIANA
Oct. 31 PENN STATE
Nov. 7 at Iowa
Nov. 14 at Illinois
Nov. 21 WISCONSIN

OHIO STATE
Sept. 5 NAVY
Sept. 12 USC
Sept. 19 vs. Toledo (Cleveland, OH)
Sept. 26 ILLINOIS
Oct. 3 at Indiana
Oct. 10 WISCONSIN
Oct. 17 at Purdue
Oct. 24 MINNESOTA
Oct. 31 NEW MEXICO STATE
Nov. 7 at Penn State
Nov. 14 IOWA
Nov. 21 at Michigan

PENN STATE
Sept. 5 AKRON
Sept. 12 SYRACUSE
Sept. 19 TEMPLE
Sept. 26 IOWA
Oct. 3 at Illinois
Oct. 10 EASTERN ILLINOIS
Oct. 17 MINNESOTA
Oct. 24 at Michigan
Oct. 31 at Northwestern
Nov. 7 OHIO STATE
Nov. 14 INDIANA
Nov. 21 at Michigan State

PURDUE
Sept. 5 TOLEDO
Sept. 12 at Oregon
Sept. 19 NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 26 NOTRE DAME
Oct. 3 NORTHWESTERN
Oct. 10 at Minnesota
Oct. 17 OHIO STATE
Oct. 24 ILLINOIS
Oct. 31 at Wisconsin
Nov. 7 at Michigan
Nov. 14 MICHIGAN STATE
Nov. 21 at Indiana

WISCONSIN
Sept. 5 NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 12 FRESNO STATE
Sept. 19 WOFFORD
Sept. 26 MICHIGAN STATE
Oct. 3 at Minnesota
Oct. 10 at Ohio State
Oct. 17 IOWA
Oct. 31 PURDUE
Nov. 7 at Indiana
Nov. 14 MICHIGAN
Nov. 21 at Northwestern
Dec. 5 at Hawaii

BIG 12

BAYLOR
Sept. 5 at Wake Forest
Sept. 19 CONNECTICUT
Sept. 26 NORTHWESTERN STATE
Oct. 3 KENT STATE
Oct. 10 at Oklahoma
Oct. 17 at Iowa State
Oct. 24 OKLAHOMA STATE
Oct. 31 NEBRASKA
Nov. 7 at Missouri
Nov. 14 TEXAS
Nov. 21 at Texas A&M
Nov. 28 Texas Tech (Arlington,TX)

COLORADO
Sept. 5 COLORADO STATE
Sept. 11 at Toledo
Sept. 19 WYOMING
Oct. 1 at West Virginia
Oct. 10 at Texas
Oct. 17 KANSAS
Oct. 24 at Kansas State
Oct. 31 MISSOURI
Nov. 7 TEXAS A&M
Nov. 14 at Iowa State
Nov. 19 at Oklahoma State
Nov. 27 NEBRASKA

IOWA STATE
Sept. 3 NORTH DAKOTA STATE
Sept. 12 IOWA
Sept. 19 at Kent State
Sept. 26 ARMY
Oct. 3 vs. Kansas State (Kansas City)
Oct. 10 at Kansas
Oct. 17 BAYLOR
Oct. 24 at Nebraska
Oct. 31 at Texas A&M
Nov. 7 OKLAHOMA STATE
Nov. 14 COLORADO
Nov. 21 at Missouri

KANSAS
Sept. 5 NORTHERN COLORADO
Sept. 12 at UTEP
Sept. 19 DUKE
Sept. 26 SOUTHERN MISS
Oct. 10 IOWA STATE
Oct. 17 at Colorado
Oct. 24 OKLAHOMA
Oct. 31 at Texas Tech
Nov. 7 at Kansas State
Nov. 14 NEBRASKA
Nov. 21 at Texas
Nov. 28 vs. Missouri (Kansas City)

KANSAS STATE
Sept. 5 MASSACHUSETTS
Sept. 12 at Louisiana-Lafayette
Sept. 19 at UCLA
Sept. 26 TENNESSEE TECH
Oct. 3 vs. Iowa State (Kansas City)
Oct. 10 at Texas Tech
Oct. 17 TEXAS A&M
Oct. 24 COLORADO
Oct. 31 at Oklahoma
Nov. 7 KANSAS
Nov. 14 MISSOURI
Nov. 21 at Nebraska

MISSOURI
Sept. 5 vs. Illinois (St. Louis)
Sept.12 BOWLING GREEN
Sept.19 FURMAN
Sept. 25 at Nevada
Oct. 8 NEBRASKA
Oct. 17 at Oklahoma State
Oct. 24 TEXAS
Oct. 31 at Colorado
Nov. 7 BAYLOR
Nov. 14 at Kansas State
Nov. 21 IOWA STATE
Nov. 28 vs. Kansas (Kansas City)

NEBRASKA
Sept. 5 FLORIDA ATLANTIC
Sept. 12 ARKANSAS STATE
Sept. 19 at Virginia Tech
Sept. 26 LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE
Oct. 8 at Missouri
Oct. 17 TEXAS TECH
Oct. 24 IOWA STATE
Oct. 31 at Baylor
Nov. 7 OKLAHOMA
Nov. 14 at Kansas
Nov. 21 KANSAS STATE
Nov. 27 at Colorado

OKLAHOMA
Sept. 5 vs. BYU (Arlington, TX)
Sept. 12 IDAHO STATE
Sept. 19 TULSA
Oct. 3 at Miami
Oct. 10 BAYLOR
Oct. 17 vs. Texas (Dallas)
Oct. 24 at Kansas
Oct. 31 KANSAS STATE
Nov. 7 at Nebraska
Nov. 14 TEXAS A&M
Nov. 21 at Texas Tech
Nov. 28 OKLAHOMA STATE

OKLAHOMA STATE
Sept. 5 GEORGIA
Sept. 12 HOUSTON
Sept. 19 RICE
Sept. 26 GRAMBLING
Oct. 10 at Texas A&M
Oct. 17 MISSOURI
Oct. 24 at Baylor
Oct. 31 TEXAS
Nov. 7 at Iowa State
Nov. 14 TEXAS TECH
Nov. 19 COLORADO
Nov. 28 at Oklahoma

Wrangler

TEXAS
Sept. 5 LOUISIANA-MONROE
Sept. 12 at Wyoming
Sept. 19 TEXAS TECH
Sept. 26 UTEP
Oct. 10 COLORADO
Oct. 17 vs. Oklahoma (Dallas)
Oct. 24 at Missouri
Oct. 31 at Oklahoma State
Nov. 7 UCF
Nov. 14 at Baylor
Nov. 21 KANSAS
Nov. 26 at Texas A&M

TEXAS A&M
Sept. 5 NEW MEXICO
Sept. 19 UTAH STATE
Sept. 26 UAB
Oct. 3 vs. Arkansas (Arlington)
Oct. 10 OKLAHOMA STATE
Oct. 17 at Kansas State
Oct. 24 at Texas Tech
Oct. 31 IOWA STATE
Nov. 7 at Colorado
Nov. 14 at Oklahoma
Nov. 21 BAYLOR
Nov. 26 TEXAS

TEXAS TECH
Sept. 5 NORTH DAKOTA
Sept.12 RICE
Sept. 19 at Texas
Sept. 26 at Houston
Oct. 3 NEW MEXICO
Oct. 10 KANSAS STATE
Oct. 17 at Nebraska
Oct. 24 TEXAS A&M
Oct. 31 KANSAS
Nov. 14 at Oklahoma State
Nov. 21 OKLAHOMA
Nov. 28 vs. Baylor (Arlington)

C-USA

EAST CAROLINA
Sept. 5 APPALACHIAN STATE
Sept. 12 at West Virginia
Sept. 19 at North Carolina
Sept. 26 UCF
Oct. 3 at Marshall
Oct. 10 at SMU
Oct. 17 RICE
Oct. 27 at Memphis
Nov. 5 VIRGINIA TECH
Nov. 15 at Tulsa
Nov. 21 UAB
Nov. 28 SOUTHERN MISS

HOUSTON
Sept. 5 NORTHWESTERN STATE
Sept. 12 at Oklahoma State
Sept. 26 TEXAS TECH
Oct. 3 at UTEP
Oct. 10 at Mississippi State
Oct. 17 at Tulane
Oct. 24 SMU
Oct. 31 SOUTHERN MISS
Nov. 7 at Tulsa
Nov. 14 at UCF
Nov. 21 MEMPHIS
Nov. 28 RICE

MARSHALL
Sept. 5 SOUTHERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 12 at Virginia Tech
Sept. 19 BOWLING GREEN
Sept. 26 at Memphis
Oct. 3 EAST CAROLINA
Oct. 10 at Tulane
Oct. 17 at West Virginia
Oct. 24 UAB
Nov. 1 at UCF
Nov. 14 SOUTHERN MISS
Nov. 21 SMU
Nov. 28 at UTEP

MEMPHIS
Sept. 6 OLE MISS
Sept. 12 at Middle Tennessee
Sept. 19 TENNESSEE-MARTIN
Sept. 26 MARSHALL
Oct. 3 at UCF
Oct. 10 UTEP
Oct. 17 at Southern Miss
Oct. 27 EAST CAROLINA
Nov. 7 at Tennessee
Nov. 14 UAB
Nov. 21 at Houston
Nov. 27 at Tulsa

RICE
Sept. 5 at UAB
Sept. 12 at Texas Tech
Sept. 19 at Oklahoma State
Sept 26 VANDERBILT
Oct. 3 TULSA
Oct. 10 NAVY
Oct. 17 at East Carolina
Oct. 24 UCF
Nov. 7 at SMU
Nov. 14 TULANE
Nov. 21 UTEP
Nov. 28 at Houston

SMU
Sept. 5 STEPHEN F. AUSTIN
Sept. 12 at UAB
Sept. 19 at Washington State
Oct. 3 at TCU
Oct. 10 EAST CAROLINA
Oct. 17 NAVY
Oct. 24 at Houston
Oct. 31 at Tulsa
Nov. 7 RICE
Nov. 14 UTEP
Nov. 21 at Marshall
Nov. 28 TULANE

SOUTHERN MISS
Sept. 5 ALCORN STATE
Sept. 12 UCF
Sept. 19 VIRGINIA
Sept. 26 at Kansas
Oct. 1 at UAB
Oct. 10 at Louisville
Oct. 17 MEMPHIS
Oct. 24 TULANE
Oct. 31 at Houston
Nov. 14 at Marshall
Nov. 21 TULSA
Nov. 28 at East Carolina

TULANE
Sept. 4 TULSA
Sept. 12 BYU
Sept. 26 McNEESE STATE
Oct. 3 at Army
Oct. 10 MARSHALL
Oct. 17 HOUSTON
Oct. 24 at Southern Miss
Oct. 31 at LSU
Nov. 7 UTEP
Nov. 14 at Rice
Nov. 21 at UCF
Nov. 28 at SMU

TULSA
Sept. 4 at Tulane
Sept. 12 at New Mexico
Sept. 19 at Oklahoma
Sept. 26 SAM HOUSTON STATE
Oct. 3 at Rice
Oct. 14 BOISE STATE
Oct. 21 at UTEP
Oct. 31 SMU
Nov. 7 HOUSTON
Nov. 15 EAST CAROLINA
Nov. 21 at Southern Miss
Nov. 27 MEMPHIS

UAB
Sept. 5 RICE
Sept. 12 SMU
Sept. 19 at Troy
Sept. 26 at Texas A&M
Oct. 1 SOUTHERN MISS
Oct. 17 at Ole Miss
Oct. 24 at Marshall
Oct. 31 at UTEP
Nov. 7 FLORIDA ATLANTIC
Nov. 14 at Memphis
Nov. 21 at East Carolina
Nov. 28 UCF

UCF
Sept. 5 SAMFORD
Sept. 12 at Southern Miss
Sept. 19 BUFFALO
Sept. 26 at East Carolina
Oct. 3 MEMPHIS
Oct. 17 MIAMI
Oct. 24 at Rice
Nov. 1 MARSHALL
Nov. 7 at Texas
Nov. 14 HOUSTON
Nov. 21 TULANE
Nov. 28 at UAB

UTEP
Sept. 5 BUFFALO
Sept. 12 KANSAS
Sept. 19 at New Mexico State
Sept. 26 at Texas
Oct. 3 HOUSTON
Oct. 10 at Memphis
Oct. 21 TULSA
Oct. 31 UAB
Nov. 7 at Tulane
Nov. 14 at SMU
Nov. 21 at Rice
Nov. 28 MARSHALL

1-A INDEPENDENTS

ARMY
Sept. 5 at Eastern Michigan
Sept. 12 DUKE
Sept. 19 BALL STATE
Sept. 26 at Iowa State
Oct. 3 TULANE
Oct. 10 VANDERBILT
Oct. 17 at Temple
Oct. 23 RUTGERS
Nov. 7 at Air Force
Nov. 14 VMI
Nov. 21 at North Texas
Dec. 12 vs. Navy (Philadelphia, Pa.)

NAVY
Sept. 5 at Ohio State
Sept. 12 LOUISIANA TECH
Sept. 19 at Pittsburgh
Sept. 26 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Oct. 3 AIR FORCE
Oct. 10 at Rice
Oct. 17 at SMU
Oct. 24 WAKE FOREST
Oct. 31 TEMPLE
Nov. 7 at Notre Dame
Nov. 14 DELAWARE
Nov. 28 at Hawaii
Dec. 12 vs. Army Philadelphia, Pa.)

NOTRE DAME
Sept. 5 NEVADA
Sept. 12 at Michigan
Sept. 19 MICHIGAN STATE
Sept. 26 at Purdue
Oct. 3 WASHINGTON
Oct. 17 USC
Oct. 24 BOSTON COLLEGE
Oct. 31 vs. Washington State (San Antonio, TX)
Nov. 7 NAVY
Nov. 14 at Pittsburgh
Nov. 21 CONNECTICUT
Nov. 28 at Stanford

MAC

AKRON
Sept. 5 at Penn State
Sept. 12 MORGAN STATE
Sept. 19 INDIANA
Sept. 26 at Central Michigan
Oct. 10 OHIO
Oct. 17 at Buffalo
Oct. 24 at Syracuse
Oct. 31 at Northern Illinois
Nov. 7 KENT STATE
Nov. 13 TEMPLE
Nov. 20 at Bowling Green
Nov. 27 EASTERN MICHIGAN

BALL STATE
Sept. 3 NORTH TEXAS
Sept. 12 NEW HAMPSHIRE
Sept. 19 at Army
Sept. 26 at Auburn
Oct. 3 TOLEDO
Oct. 10 at Temple
Oct. 17 BOWLING GREEN
Oct. 24 at Eastern Michigan
Oct. 31 OHIO
Nov. 12 at Northern Illinois
Nov. 18 CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Nov. 24 at Western Michigan

BOWLING GREEN
Sept. 3 TROY
Sept. 12 at Missouri
Sept. 19 at Marshall
Sept. 26 BOISE STATE
Oct. 3 OHIO
Oct. 10 at Kent State
Oct. 17 at Ball State
Oct. 24 CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Nov. 3 at Buffalo
Nov. 12 at Miami (OH)
Nov. 20 AKRON
Nov. 27 TOLEDO

BUFFALO
Sept. 5 at UTEP
Sept. 12 PITTSBURGH
Sept. 19 at UCF
Sept. 26 at Temple
Oct. 3 CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Oct. 10 GARDNER-WEBB
Oct. 17 AKRON
Oct. 24 at Western Michigan
Nov. 3 BOWLING GREEN
Nov. 10 OHIO
Nov. 18 at Miami (OH)
Nov. 27 at Kent State

CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Sept. 5 at Arizona
Sept. 12 at Michigan State
Sept. 19 ALCORN STATE
Sept. 26 AKRON
Oct. 3 at Buffalo
Oct. 10 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Oct. 17 at Western Michigan
Oct. 24 at Bowling Green
Oct. 31 at Boston College
Nov. 11 TOLEDO
Nov. 18 at Ball State
Nov. 27 NORTHERN ILLINOIS

EASTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 5 ARMY
Sept. 12 at Northwestern
Sept. 19 at Michigan
Oct. 3 TEMPLE
Oct. 10 at Central Michigan
Oct. 17 KENT STATE
Oct. 24 BALL STATE
Oct. 31 at Arkansas
Nov. 5 at Northern Illinois
Nov. 14 WESTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 20 at Toledo
Nov. 27 at Akron

KENT STATE
Sept. 3 COASTAL CAROLINA
Sept. 12 at Boston College
Sept. 19 IOWA STATE
Sept. 26 MIAMI (OH)
Oct. 3 at Baylor
Oct. 10 BOWLING GREEN
Oct. 17 at Eastern Michigan
Oct. 24 at Ohio
Oct. 31 WESTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 7 at Akron
Nov. 21 at Temple
Nov. 27 BUFFALO

MIAMI (OH)
Sept. 5 vs. Kentucky (Cincinnati)
Sept. 12 at Boise State
Sept. 19 at Western Michigan
Sept. 26 at Kent State
Oct. 3 CINCINNATI
Oct. 10 at Northwestern
Oct. 17 at Ohio
Oct. 24 NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Oct. 31 TOLEDO
Nov. 5 at Temple
Nov. 12 BOWLING GREEN
Nov. 18 BUFFALO

NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 5 at Wisconsin
Sept. 12 WESTERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 19 at Purdue
Sept. 26 IDAHO
Oct. 3 WESTERN MICHIGAN
Oct. 17 at Toledo
Oct. 24 at Miami (OH)
Oct. 31 AKRON
Nov. 5 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 12 BALL STATE
Nov. 21 at Ohio
Nov. 27 at Central Michigan

OHIO
Sept. 5 CONNECTICUT
Sept. 12 at North Texas
Sept. 19 CAL POLY
Sept. 26 at Tennessee
Oct. 3 at Bowling Green
Oct. 10 at Akron
Oct. 17 MIAMI (OH)
Oct. 24 KENT STATE
Oct. 31 at Ball State
Nov. 10 at Buffalo
Nov. 21 NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Nov. 27 TEMPLE

TEMPLE
SEP. 3 VILLANOVA
Sep. 19 at Penn State
SEP. 26 BUFFALO
Oct. 3 at Eastern Michigan
Oct. 10 BALL STATE
Oct. 17 ARMY
Oct. 24 at Toledo
Oct. 31 at Navy
Nov. 5 MIAMI (OH)
Nov. 13 at Akron
Nov. 21 KENT STATE
Nov. 27 at Ohio

TOLEDO
Sept. 5 at Purdue
Sept. 11 COLORADO
Sept. 19 vs. Ohio State (Cleveland, OH)
Sept. 26 at Florida International
Oct. 3 at Ball State
Oct. 10 WESTERN MICHIGAN
Oct. 17 NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Oct. 24 TEMPLE
Oct. 31 at Miami (OH)
Nov. 11 at Central Michigan
Nov. 20 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 27 at Bowling Green

WESTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 5 at Michigan
Sept. 12 at Indiana
Sept. 19 MIAMI (OH)
Sept. 26 HOFSTRA
Oct. 3 at Northern Illinois
Oct. 10 at Toledo
Oct. 17 CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Oct. 24 BUFFALO
Oct. 31 at Kent State
Nov. 7 at Michigan State
Nov. 14 at Eastern Michigan
Nov. 24 BALL STATE

MOUNTAIN WEST

AIR FORCE
Sept. 5 NICHOLLS STATE
Sept. 12 at Minnesota
Sept. 19 at New Mexico
Sept. 26 SAN DIEGO STATE
Oct. 3 at Navy
Oct. 10 TCU
Oct. 17 WYOMING
Oct. 24 at Utah
Oct. 31 at Colorado State
Nov. 7 ARMY
Nov. 14 UNLV
Nov. 21 at BYU

BYU
Sept. 5 vs. Oklahoma (Arlington,TX)
Sept. 12 at Tulane
Sept. 19 FLORIDA STATE
Sept. 26 COLORADO STATE
Oct. 2 UTAH STATE
Oct. 10 at UNLV
Oct. 17 at San Diego State
Oct. 24 TCU
Nov. 7 at Wyoming
Nov. 14 at New Mexico
Nov. 21 AIR FORCE
Nov. 28 UTAH

COLORADO STATE
Sept. 5 at Colorado
Sept. 12 WEBER STATE
Sept. 19 NEVADA
Sept. 26 at BYU
Oct. 3 at Idaho
Oct. 10 UTAH
Oct. 17 at TCU
Oct. 24 SAN DIEGO STATE
Oct. 31 AIR FORCE
Nov. 7 at UNLV
Nov. 21 at New Mexico
Nov. 27 WYOMING

NEW MEXICO
Sept. 5 at Texas A&M
Sept. 12 TULSA
Sept. 19 AIR FORCE
Sept. 26 NEW MEXICO STATE
Oct. 3 at Texas Tech
Oct. 10 at Wyoming
Oct. 24 UNLV
Oct. 31 at San Diego State
Nov. 7 at Utah
Nov. 14 BYU
Nov. 21 COLORADO STATE
Nov. 28 at TCU

SAN DIEGO STATE
Sept. 5 at UCLA
Sept. 12 SOUTHERN UTAH
Sept. 19 at Idaho
Sept. 26 at Air Force
Oct. 3 NEW MEXICO STATE
Oct. 17 BYU
Oct. 24 at Colorado State
Oct. 31 NEW MEXICO
Nov. 7 TCU
Nov. 14 WYOMING
Nov. 21 at Utah
Nov. 28 at UNLV

TCU
Sept. 12 at Virginia
Sept. 19 TEXAS STATE
Sept. 26 at Clemson
Oct. 3 SMU
Oct. 10 at Air Force
Oct. 17 COLORADO STATE
Oct. 24 at BYU
Oct. 31 UNLV
Nov. 7 at San Diego State
Nov. 14 UTAH
Nov. 21 at Wyoming
Nov. 28 NEW MEXICO

UNLV
Sept. 5 SACRAMENTO STATE
Sept. 12 OREGON STATE
Sept. 19 HAWAII
Sept. 26 at Wyoming
Oct. 3 at Nevada
Oct. 10 BYU
Oct. 17 UTAH
Oct. 24 at New Mexico
Oct. 31 at TCU
Nov. 7 COLORADO STATE
Nov. 14 at Air Force
Nov. 28 SAN DIEGO STATE

UTAH
Sept. 3 UTAH STATE
Sept. 12 at San Jose State
Sept. 19 at Oregon
Sept. 26 LOUISVILLE
Oct. 10 at Colorado State
Oct. 17 at UNLV
Oct. 24 AIR FORCE
Oct. 31 WYOMING
Nov. 7 NEW MEXICO
Nov. 14 at TCU
Nov. 21 SAN DIEGO STATE
Nov. 28 at BYU

WYOMING
Sept. 5 WEBER STATE
Sept. 12 TEXAS
Sept. 19 at Colorado
Sept. 26 UNLV
Oct. 3 at Florida Atlantic
Oct. 10 NEW MEXICO
Oct. 17 at Air Force
Oct. 31 at Utah
Nov. 7 BYU
Nov. 14 at San Diego State
Nov. 21 TCU
Nov. 27 at Colorado State

Wrangler

PAC-10

ARIZONA
Sept. 5 CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Sept. 12 NORTHERN ARIZONA
Sept. 19 at Iowa
Sept. 26 at Oregon State
Oct. 10 at Washington
Oct. 17 STANFORD
Oct. 24 UCLA
Nov. 7 WASHINGTON STATE
Nov. 14 at California
Nov. 21 OREGON
Nov. 28 at Arizona State
Dec. 5 at USC

ARIZONA STATE
Sept. 5 IDAHO STATE
Sept. 19 LOUISIANA-MONROE
Sept. 26 at Georgia
Oct. 3 OREGON STATE
Oct. 10 at Washington State
Oct. 17 WASHINGTON
Oct. 24 at Stanford
Oct. 31 CALIFORNIA
Nov. 7 USC
Nov. 14 at Oregon
Nov. 21 at UCLA
Nov. 28 ARIZONA

CAL
Sept. 5 MARYLAND
Sept. 12 EASTERN WASHINGTON
Sept. 19 at Minnesota
Sept. 26 at Oregon
Oct. 3 USC
Oct. 17 at UCLA
Oct. 24 WASHINGTON STATE
Oct. 31 at Arizona State
Nov. 7 OREGON STATE
Nov. 14 ARIZONA
Nov. 21 at Stanford
Dec. 5 at Washington

OREGON
Sept. 3 at Boise State
Sept. 12 PURDUE
Sept. 19 UTAH
Sept. 26 CALIFORNIA
Oct. 3 WASHINGTON STATE
Oct. 10 at UCLA
Oct. 24 at Washington
Oct. 31 USC
Nov. 7 at Stanford
Nov. 14 ARIZONA STATE
Nov. 21 at Arizona
Dec. 3 OREGON STATE

OREGON STATE
Sept. 5 PORTLAND STATE
Sept. 12 at UNLV
Sept. 19 CINCINNATI
Sept. 26 ARIZONA
Oct. 3 at Arizona State
Oct. 10 STANFORD
Oct. 24 at USC
Oct. 31 UCLA
Nov. 7 at California
Nov. 14 WASHINGTON
Nov. 21 at Washington State
Dec. 3 at Oregon

STANFORD
Sept. 5 at Washington State
Sept. 12 at Wake Forest
Sept. 19 SAN JOSE STATE
Sept. 26 WASHINGTON
Oct. 3 UCLA
Oct. 10 at Oregon State
Oct. 17 at Arizona
Oct. 24 ARIZONA STATE
Nov. 7 OREGON
Nov. 14 at USC
Nov. 21 CALIFORNIA
Nov. 28 NOTRE DAME

UCLA
Sept. 5 SAN DIEGO STATE
Sept. 12 at Tennessee
Sept. 19 KANSAS STATE
Oct. 3 at Stanford
Oct. 10 OREGON
Oct. 17 CALIFORNIA
Oct. 24 at Arizona
Oct. 31 at Oregon State
Nov. 7 WASHINGTON
Nov. 14 at Washington State
Nov. 21 ARIZONA STATE
Nov. 28 at USC

USC
Sept. 5 SAN JOSE STATE
Sept. 12 at Ohio State
Sept. 19 at Washington
Sept. 26 WASHINGTON STATE
Oct. 3 at California
Oct. 17 at Notre Dame
Oct. 24 OREGON STATE
Oct. 31 at Oregon
Nov. 7 at Arizona State
Nov. 14 STANFORD
Nov. 28 UCLA
Dec. 5 ARIZONA

WASHINGTON
Sept. 5 LSU
Sept. 12 IDAHO
Sept. 19 USC
Sept. 26 at Stanford
Oct. 3 at Notre Dame
Oct. 10 ARIZONA
Oct. 17 at Arizona State
Oct. 24 OREGON
Nov. 7 at UCLA
Nov. 14 at Oregon State
Nov. 28 WASHINGTON STATE
Dec. 5 CALIFORNIA

WASHINGTON STATE
Sept. 5 STANFORD
Sept. 12 vs. Hawaii (Seattle)
Sept. 19 SMU
Sept. 26 at USC
Oct. 3 at Oregon
Oct. 10 ARIZONA STATE
Oct. 24 at California
Oct. 31 vs. Notre Dame (San Antonio, TX)
Nov. 7 at Arizona
Nov. 14 UCLA
Nov. 21 OREGON STATE
Nov. 28 at Washington

SEC

ALABAMA
Sept. 5 vs. Virginia Tech (Atlanta)
Sept. 12 FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
Sept. 19 NORTH TEXAS
Sept. 26 ARKANSAS
Oct. 3 at Kentucky
Oct. 10 at Ole Miss
Oct. 17 SOUTH CAROLINA
Oct. 24 TENNESSEE
Nov. 7 LSU
Nov. 14 at Mississippi State
Nov. 21 CHATTANOOGA
Nov. 27 at Auburn

ARKANSAS
Sept. 5 vs. Missouri State (Little Rock)
Sept. 19 GEORGIA
Sept. 26 at Alabama
Oct. 3 vs. Texas A&M (Arlington)
Oct. 10 AUBURN
Oct. 17 at Florida
Oct. 24 at Ole Miss
Oct. 31 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 7 SOUTH CAROLINA
Nov. 14 TROY
Nov. 21 vs. Mississippi St. (Little Rock)
Nov. 28 at LSU

AUBURN
Sept. 5 LOUISIANA TECH
Sept. 12 MISSISSIPPI STATE
Sept. 19 WEST VIRGINIA
Sept. 26 BALL STATE
Oct. 3 at Tennessee
Oct. 10 at Arkansas
Oct. 17 KENTUCKY
Oct. 24 at LSU
Oct. 31 OLE MISS
Nov. 7 FURMAN
Nov. 14 at Georgia
Nov. 27 ALABAMA

FLORIDA
Sept. 5 CHARLESTON SOUTHERN
Sept. 12 TROY
Sept. 19 TENNESSEE
Sept. 26 at Kentucky
Oct. 10 at LSU
Oct. 17 ARKANSAS
Oct. 24 at Mississippi State
Oct. 31 vs. Georgia (Jacksonville)
Nov. 7 VANDERBILT
Nov. 14 at South Carolina
Nov. 21 FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
Nov. 28 FLORIDA STATE

GEORGIA
Sept. 5 at Oklahoma State
Sept. 12 SOUTH CAROLINA
Sept. 19 at Arkansas
Sept. 26 ARIZONA STATE
Oct. 3 LSU
Oct. 10 at Tennessee
Oct. 17 at Vanderbilt
Oct. 31 vs. Florida (Jacksonville)
Nov. 7 TENNESSEE TECH
Nov. 14 AUBURN
Nov. 21 KENTUCKY
Nov. 28 at Georgia Tech

KENTUCKY
Sept. 5 vs. Miami (OH) (Cincinnati)
Sept. 19 LOUISVILLE
Sept. 26 FLORIDA
Oct. 3 ALABAMA
Oct. 10 at South Carolina
Oct. 17 at Auburn
Oct. 24 LOUISIANA-MONROE
Oct. 31 MISSISSIPPI STATE
Nov. 7 EASTERN KENTUCKY
Nov. 14 at Vanderbilt
Nov. 21 at Georgia
Nov. 28 TENNESSEE

LSU
Sept. 5 at Washington
Sept. 12 VANDERBILT
Sept. 19 LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE
Sept. 26 at Mississippi State
Oct. 3 at Georgia
Oct. 10 FLORIDA
Oct. 24 AUBURN
Oct. 31 TULANE
Nov. 7 at Alabama
Nov. 14 LOUISIANA TECH
Nov. 21 at Ole Miss
Nov. 28 ARKANSAS

OLE MISS
Sept. 6 at Memphis
Sept. 19 SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA
Sept. 24 at South Carolina
Oct. 3 at Vanderbilt
Oct. 10 ALABAMA
Oct. 17 UAB
Oct. 24 ARKANSAS
Oct. 31 at Auburn
Nov. 7 NORTHERN ARIZONA
Nov. 14 TENNESSEE
Nov. 21 LSU
Nov. 28 at Mississippi State

MISS. STATE
Sept. 5 JACKSON STATE
Sept. 12 at Auburn
Sept. 19 at Vanderbilt
Sept. 26 LSU
Oct. 3 GEORGIA TECH
Oct. 10 HOUSTON
Oct. 17 at Middle Tennessee
Oct. 24 FLORIDA
Oct. 31 at Kentucky
Nov. 14 ALABAMA
Nov. 21 vs. Arkansas (Little Rock)
Nov. 28 OLE MISS

SOUTH CAROLINA
Sept. 3 at North Carolina State
Sept. 12 at Georgia
Sept. 19 FLORIDA ATLANTIC
Sept. 24 OLE MISS
Oct. 3 SOUTH CAROLINA STATE
Oct. 10 KENTUCKY
Oct. 17 at Alabama
Oct. 24 VANDERBILT
Oct. 31 at Tennessee
Nov. 7 at Arkansas
Nov. 14 FLORIDA
Nov. 28 CLEMSON

TENNESSEE
Sept. 5 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Sept. 12 UCLA
Sept. 19 at Florida
Sept. 26 OHIO
Oct. 3 AUBURN
Oct. 10 GEORGIA
Oct. 24 at Alabama
Oct. 31 SOUTH CAROLINA
Nov. 7 MEMPHIS
Nov. 14 at Ole Miss
Nov. 21 VANDERBILT
Nov. 28 at Kentucky

VANDERBILT
Sept. 5 WESTERN CAROLINA
Sept. 12 at LSU
Sept. 19 OLE MISS
Sept. 26 at Rice
Oct. 3 MISSISSIPPI STATE
Oct. 10 at Army
Oct. 17 GEORGIA
Oct. 24 at South Carolina
Oct. 31 GEORGIA TECH
Nov. 7 at Florida
Nov. 14 KENTUCKY
Nov. 21 at Tennessee

SUN BELT

ARKANSAS STATE
Sept. 5 MISSISSIPPI VALLEY STATE
Sept. 12 at Nebraska
Sept. 26 TROY
Oct. 3 at Iowa
Oct. 13 at Louisiana-Monroe
Oct. 24 FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
Oct. 31 at Louisville
Nov. 7 LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE
Nov. 14 at Florida Atlantic
Nov. 21 at Middle Tennessee
Nov. 28 NORTH TEXAS
Dec. 3 at Western Kentucky

FLORIDA ATLANTIC
Sept. 5 at Nebraska
Sept. 19 at South Carolina
Sept. 26 LOUISIANA-MONROE
Oct. 3 WYOMING
Oct. 17 at North Texas
Oct. 24 at Louisiana-Lafayette
Oct. 31 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Nov. 7 at UAB
Nov. 14 ARKANSAS STATE
Nov. 21 at Troy
Nov. 28 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Dec. 5 at Florida International

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
Sept. 12 at Alabama
Sept. 19 at Rutgers
Sept. 26 TOLEDO
Oct. 3 at Louisiana-Monroe
Oct. 10 at Western Kentucky
Oct. 17 TROY
Oct. 24 at Arkansas State
Oct. 31 LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE
Nov. 7 at Middle Tennessee
Nov. 14 NORTH TEXAS
Nov. 21 at Florida
Dec. 5 FLORIDA ATLANTIC

LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE
Sept. 5 SOUTHERN
Sept. 12 KANSAS STATE
Sept. 19 at LSU
Sept. 26 at Nebraska
Oct. 10 NORTH TEXAS
Oct. 17 at Western Kentucky
Oct. 24 FLORIDA ATLANTIC
Oct. 31 at Florida International
Nov. 7 at Arkansas State
Nov. 14 at Middle Tennessee
Nov. 21 LOUISIANA-MONROE
Nov. 28 TROY

LOUISIANA MONROE
Sept. 5 at Texas
Sept. 12 TEXAS SOUTHERN
Sept. 19 at Arizona State
Sept. 26 at Florida Atlantic
Oct. 3 FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
Oct. 13 ARKANSAS STATE
Oct. 24 at Kentucky
Oct. 31 at Troy
Nov. 7 at North Texas
Nov. 14 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Nov. 21 at Louisiana-Lafayette
Nov. 28 MIDDLE TENNEESSEE

MIDDLE TENNEESSEE
Sept. 5 at Clemson
Sept. 12 MEMPHIS
Sept. 19 at Maryland
Sept. 26 at North Texas
Oct. 6 at Troy
Oct. 17 MISSISSIPPI STATE
Oct. 24 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Oct. 31 at Florida Atlantic
Nov. 7 FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
Nov. 14 LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE
Nov. 21 ARKANSAS STATE
Nov. 28 at Louisiana-Monroe

NORTH TEXAS
Sept. 3 at Ball State
Sept. 12 OHIO
Sept. 19 at Alabama
Sept. 26 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Oct. 10 at Louisiana-Lafayette
Oct. 17 FLORIDA ATLANTIC
Oct. 24 at Troy
Oct. 31 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Nov. 7 LOUISIANA-MONROE
Nov. 14 at Florida International
Nov. 21 ARMY
Nov. 28 at Arkansas State

TROY
Sept. 3 at Bowling Green
Sept. 12 at Florida
Sept. 19 UAB
Sept. 26 at Arkansas State
Oct. 6 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Oct. 17 at Florida International
Oct. 24 NORTH TEXAS
Oct. 31 LOUISIANA-MONROE
Nov. 7 at Western Kentucky
Nov. 14 at Arkansas
Nov. 21 FLORIDA ATLANTIC
Nov. 28 at Louisiana-Lafayette

WESTERN KENTUCKY
Sept. 5 at Tennessee
Sept. 12 SOUTH FLORIDA
Sept. 19 CENTRAL ARKANSAS
Sept. 26 at Navy
Oct. 10 FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
Oct. 17 LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE
Oct. 24 at Middle Tennessee
Oct. 31 at North Texas
Nov. 7 TROY
Nov. 14 at Louisiana-Monroe
Nov. 28 at Florida Atlantic
Dec. 3 ARKANSAS STATE

WAC

BOISE STATE
Sept. 3 OREGON
Sept. 12 MIAMI (OH)
Sept. 18 at Fresno State
Sept. 26 at Bowling Green
Oct. 3 UC DAVIS
Oct. 14 at Tulsa
Oct. 24 at Hawaii
Oct. 31 SAN JOSE STATE
Nov. 6 at Louisiana Tech
Nov. 14 IDAHO
Nov. 20 at Utah State
Nov. 27 NEVADA
Dec. 5 NEW MEXICO STATE

FRESNO STATE
Sept. 5 UC DAVIS
Sept. 12 at Wisconsin
Sept. 18 BOISE STATE
Sept. 26 at Cincinnati
Oct. 10 at Hawaii
Oct. 17 SAN JOSE STATE
Oct. 24 at New Mexico State
Oct. 31 UTAH STATE
Nov. 7 at Idaho
Nov. 14 at Nevada
Nov. 21 LOUISIANA TECH
Dec. 5 at Illinois

HAWAII
Sept. 4 CENTRAL ARKANSAS
Sept. 12 vs. Washington State (Seattle)
Sept. 19 at UNLV
Sept. 30 at Louisiana Tech
Oct. 10 FRESNO STATE
Oct. 17 at Idaho
Oct. 24 BOISE STATE
Oct. 31 at Nevada
Nov. 7 UTAH STATE
Nov. 14 NEW MEXICO STATE
Nov. 21 at San Jose State
Nov. 28 NAVY
Dec. 5 WISCONSIN

IDAHO
Sept. 5 at New Mexico State
Sept. 12 at Washington
Sept. 19 SAN DIEGO STATE
Sept. 26 at Northern Illinois
Oct. 3 COLORADO STATE
Oct. 10 at San Jose State
Oct. 17 HAWAII
Oct. 24 at Nevada
Oct. 31 LOUISIANA TECH
Nov. 7 FRESNO STATE
Nov. 14 at Boise State
Nov. 28 UTAH STATE

LOUISIANA TECH
Sept. 5 at Auburn
Sept. 12 at Navy
Sept. 19 NICHOLLS STATE
Sept. 30 HAWAII
Oct. 9 at Nevada
Oct. 17 NEW MEXICO STATE
Oct. 24 at Utah State
Oct. 31 at Idaho
Nov. 6 BOISE STATE
Nov. 14 at LSU
Nov. 21 at Fresno State
Dec. 5 SAN JOSE STATE

NEVADA
Sept. 5 at Notre Dame
Sept. 19 at Colorado State
Sept. 25 MISSOURI
Oct. 3 UNLV
Oct. 9 LOUISIANA TECH
Oct. 17 at Utah State
Oct. 24 IDAHO
Oct. 31 HAWAII
Nov. 8 at San Jose State
Nov. 14 FRESNO STATE
Nov. 21 at New Mexico State
Nov. 27 at Boise State

NEW MEXICO STATE
Sept. 5 IDAHO
Sept. 12 PRAIRIE VIEW A&M
Sept. 19 UTEP
Sept. 26 at New Mexico
Oct. 3 at San Diego State
Oct. 10 UTAH STATE
Oct. 17 at Louisiana Tech
Oct. 24 FRESNO STATE
Oct. 31 at Ohio State
Nov. 14 at Hawaii
Nov. 21 NEVADA
Nov. 28 at San Jose State
Dec. 5 at Boise State

SAN JOSE STATE
Sept. 5 at USC
Sept. 12 UTAH
Sept. 19 at Stanford
Sept. 26 CAL POLY
Oct. 10 IDAHO
Oct. 17 at Fresno State
Oct. 31 at Boise State
Nov. 8 NEVADA
Nov. 14 at Utah State
Nov. 21 HAWAII
Nov. 28 NEW MEXICO STATE
Dec. 5 at Louisiana Tech

UTAH STATE
Sept. 3 at Utah
Sept. 19 at Texas A&M
Sept. 26 SOUTHERN UTAH
Oct. 2 at BYU
Oct. 10 at New Mexico State
Oct. 17 NEVADA
Oct. 24 LOUISIANA TECH
Oct. 31 at Fresno State
Nov. 7 at Hawaii
Nov. 14 SAN JOSE STATE
Nov. 20 BOISE STATE
Nov. 28 at Idaho

Playoffs Will Soon Get Bigger... Maybe Better

This New Year's Eve, Auld Lang Syne may ring especially nostalgic for FCS football fans, who will bid adieu to the traditional four-week, 16-team bracket after the championship game in Chattanooga.

After 32 years of crowing the champ of the Football Championship Subdivision before Christmas, the title game will become a January affair next season.

The reason? Access.

The key buzzword in college football is defined by Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of Law as "freedom or ability to obtain, make use of, or participate in ... "

Something like the postseason, perhaps?

In the Football Bowl Subdivision, BCS revenues have led to increased calls for a playoff with automatic access for all FBS leagues. Loud, long-suffering FBS fans were recently joined by Congress and President Obama in calling for expanded BCS access, especially for the five leagues without automatic bids.

One problem in the FBS is that the postseason is operated mostly outside the control of the NCAA. In Division I's other half, the FCS playoffs are administered by the NCAA, so there really is no good reason for not providing automatic bid access to all interested conferences.

In the FCS, where playoff football has been the method of determining a national champion since 1977, the current format is due a major tweaking after the 2009 edition ... in the name of "access."

"We all believe that the playoffs should be expanded," said Tom Yeager, Commissioner of CAA Football. "And in that regard when we look across all sports, we recognize the appropriateness of conference champions being given the opportunity to participate in the National Championship."

To improve FCS championship access, the bracket will expand from 16 to 20 teams, necessitating a jump from four rounds to five.

Commissioners, coaches, school presidents, athletic directors and NCAA officials looked at many possible solutions. In the end, they decided against starting the season a week earlier or eliminating the bye week. The only choice was to move the title game from its traditional third Friday in December.

It was decided to schedule the FCS title game on the eve of the BCS championship game, a calculated marketing gamble.

Either the FCS game will benefit from increased visibility and association with the BCS championship ... or it will become lost hopelessly.

If millions of new TV viewers tune in only to see a half-empty Finley Stadium, the association becomes an embarrassing juxtaposition. But, if the FCS produces a compelling and well-attended match-up, dividends in respect and, eventually, revenue could be realized.

FBS fans have long pointed to the FCS playoffs as proof that a playoff can work in Division I.

"There was great symmetry and momentum to the 16-team format," Yeager said. "We hope that the same interest can be generated around the championship game right before the BCS championship game. If that occurs, we will have benefited by the expanded playoffs."

So this December, go ahead and wax nostalgic for the familiar FCS playoff format, because big changes are coming to the FCS ... all in the name of "access."

Expect plenty of familiar names to populate the FCS brackets when they're announced Nov. 22.

"A conference's NCAA playoff reputation from past performance is likely to carry significant weight in [the] selections because there are few other comparison factors," Yeager said.

That's good news for CAA Football, which has sent five teams to the tournament in each of the past two seasons. It could happen again, with Richmond, Villanova, James Madison, New Hampshire, and William & Mary expected to contend.

Others expected to return include Appalachian State, Montana, Northern Iowa, Texas State, McNeese State, and Southern Illinois. Central Arkansas is a playoff-caliber team, but it's still transitioning from Div. II, and thus is ineligible.

Eastern Washington also has enough talent to go all the way, but is under an NCAA postseason ban.

Tennessee-Chattanooga is rebuilding its football program and working hard to improve APR scores, but will be ineligible for the 2009 FCS playoffs.

This could be only the beginning of expansion. The subdivision continues to grow, with 117 teams competing this year, and six programs transitioning. At least four more schools are actively developing football programs.

— Otto Fad

FCS Top 25

1. Appalachian State	Armanti Edwards and senior Mountaineers are 13-1 in their FCS playoff careers.
2. Richmond	Mike London was no Peter Parker in national championship debut with Spider men.
3. Montana	Griz' are 34-4 in Big Sky and looking for third Chattanooga trip in six seasons.
4. Northern Iowa	Led by DL James Ruffin, Panthers again challenge for national supremacy.
5. Villanova	Andy Talley's Silver Anniversary Edition Wildcats could be his greatest yet.
6. Texas State	All-American RB Karrington Bush tops list of 14 Bobcat returning starters.
7. James Madison	Dukes lost in semis to Montana; Mickey Matthews won second Eddie Robinson trophy.
8. Central Arkansas	Completing Div. I transition; Bears again are best ineligible team in the FCS.
9. Weber State	Wildcats should light-up Big Sky scoreboards, but questions about young defense.
10. New Hampshire	Quarterback R.J. Toman returns after leading Wildcats to quarterfinals in 2008.
11. South Dakota State	Except for Nov. 14 at Minnesota, Jackrabbits' toughest foes booked in Brookings.
12. Southern Illinois	Salukis prep for 73rd and final season at "The Mac," seventh straight playoff appearance.
13. Tennessee-Martin	If UTM can break EKU jinx (0-19 all-time), Skyhawks could soar in playoffs.
14. Elon	Phoenix have nation's top pass/catch combo: QB Scott Riddle/WR Terrell Hudgins.
15. Jacksonville State	How far can Ryan Perrilloux take Gamecocks after openers at Georgia Tech, FSU?
16. William & Mary	Tribe will be solid on both sides behind RB Jonathan Grimes and DE Adrian Tracy.
17. Eastern Washington	Eagles have offensive firepower to go deep, but must appeal NCAA playoff ban.
18. Coastal Carolina	QB Zach MacDowell seldom makes mistakes, leads Chanticleers' playoff push.
19. McNeese State	Matt Viator has holes to fill, but is already 24-7 in three Cowboy campaigns.
20. Georgia Southern	Chris Hatcher continues rebuilding GSU pride; 2008 Eagles were 3-1 in overtimes.
21. Holy Cross	Loss in finale at Colgate was only '08 blemish, kept Crusaders out of playoffs.
22. Harvard	Tim Murphy's Crimson only Ivy team ever to win seven or more in eight consecutive years.
23. South Carolina State	Bulldogs were perfect 8-0 in MEAC, earning first FCS playoff appearance.
24. Florida A&M	Joe Taylor got FAMU back on track in 9-3 debut, has 18 starters returning.
25. Delaware	Hens hope Penn State transfer Pat Devlin is more Joe Flacco, less Rob Schoenhoft.

Lindy's 2009 All-FCS Teams

OFFENSE - First Team

QB	Armanti Edwards	Sr.	Appalachian State
RB	Chase Reynolds	Jr.	Montana
RB	Kyle Minett	Jr.	South Dakota State
WR	Andre Roberts	Sr.	The Citadel
WR	Terrell Hudgins	Sr.	Elon
TE	Scott Sicko	Sr.	New Hampshire
OL	Austin Howard	Sr.	Northern Iowa
OL	Mario Acitelli	Sr.	Appalachian State
OL	Lane Freiwald	Sr.	Central Arkansas
OL	Ben Ijalana	Jr.	Villanova
OL	James Williams	Sr.	Harvard
AP	Trevyn Smith	Sr.	Weber State
K	Billy Hallgren	Jr.	Northern Iowa

DEFENSE - First Team

DL	Kevin Linehan	Sr.	Weber State
DL	James Ruffin	Sr.	Northern Iowa
DL	Dane Fletcher	Sr.	Montana State
DL	Adrian Tracy	Sr.	William & Mary
LB	Jabara Williams	Jr.	Stephen F. Austin
LB	Alexander Henderson	Sr.	Jacksonville State
LB	Jacque Roman	Sr.	Appalachian State
DB	Mark LeGree	Jr.	Appalachian State
DB	Justin Rogers	Jr.	Richmond
DB	Kevis Buckley	Sr.	Austin Peay
DB	Wesley Eckles	Sr.	Northwestern State
P	Patrick Dolan	Jr.	Nicholls State

OFFENSE - Second Team

QB	Cameron Higgins	Jr.	Weber State
RB	David Sinisi	Sr.	Monmouth
RB	Todd Pendland	Sr.	McNeese State
WR	Marc Mariani	Sr.	Montana
WR	Shaun Pasternak	Jr.	Bucknell
TE	Cody Nakamura	Sr.	Weber State
OL	Chaz Millard	Sr.	Eastern Illinois
OL	Aaron Jones	Sr.	Holy Cross
OL	Austin Steichen	Sr.	Northern Iowa
OL	Derek Hardman	Sr.	Eastern Kentucky
OL	Robert Okeafor	Sr.	Florida A&M
AP	Karrington Bush	Jr.	Texas State
K	Andrew Howard	Sr.	Richmond

DEFENSE - Second Team

DL	Arthur Moats	Sr.	James Madison
DL	Danny Batten	Sr.	South Dakota State
DL	Phillip Oboh	Sr.	Coastal Carolina
DL	Austen Lane	Sr.	Murray State
LB	Jeffrey Williams	Jr.	Gardner-Webb
LB	Brandin Jordan	Sr.	Southern Illinois
LB	Matt Cohen	Sr.	Lehigh
DB	Phillip Ashley	Sr.	Charleston Southern
DB	Terrell Whitehead	Sr.	Norfolk State
DB	Tommy Connors	Sr.	SE Louisiana
DB	Chris Wynn	Sr.	Pennsylvania
P	Tom Mante	Sr.	Yale

THE BIG ONES

SEPTEMBER 3
Villanova at Temple (FBS)
No Brotherly Love lost in this rivalry. Andy Talley's Wildcats won the last time they tangled in 2003, and now trail just 15-12-2.

SEPTEMBER 5
Chowan (Div. II) at Old Dominion
The first football game in 69 years for ODU is also the Monarchs' first of seven home contests in 2009.

SEPTEMBER 19
Delaware State at Delaware
The intrastate rivalry that wasn't ... until now. Only previous meeting was 2007 NCAA first-round playoff tilt taken by the Blue Hens, 44-7.

OCTOBER 17
Tennessee-Martin at Eastern Kentucky
EKU blocked a field goal as time expired to beat UT Martin and claim the OVC championship last year. UTM looks for its first win over EKU in 20 tries.

NOVEMBER 14
South Dakota State at Minnesota (FBS)
The Gophers have a habit of underestimating FCS foes. If they take the Jackrabbits for granted ...

2008 PLAYOFFS

FIRST ROUND

#1 James Madison 38, Wofford 35
Villanova 55, Colgate 28
#4 Montana 31, Texas State 13
Weber State 49, Cal Poly 35
#2 Appalachian State 37, South Carolina State 21
Richmond 38, Eastern Kentucky 10
#3 Northern Iowa 40, Maine 15
New Hampshire 29, Southern Illinois 20

QUARTERFINALS

#1 James Madison 31, Villanova 27
#4 Montana 24, Weber State 13
Richmond 33, #2 Appalachian State 13
#3 Northern Iowa 36, New Hampshire 29

SEMIFINALS

#4 Montana 35, #1 James Madison 27
Richmond 21, #3 Northern Iowa 20

CHAMPIONSHIP

Richmond 24, #4 Montana 7

Photo by Marvin Gentry-US PRESSWIRE

Most Valuable Player	Offensive Player of the Year	Defensive Player of the Year	Newcomer of the Year
Armanti Edwards QB, Appalachian State	Cameron Higgins QB, Weber State	James Ruffin DE, Northern Iowa	Michael Baker LB, N. Carolina Central

BIG SKY CONFERENCE

Offensive Player of the Year: Cameron Higgins, QB, Weber State
Defensive Player of the Year: Dane Fletcher, DE, Montana State

In the Big Sky, it's no longer Montana and eight also-rans. The Griz' are still the easy pick to advance to a mind-bending 17th consecutive FCS playoff berth — but taking the Big Sky will be no picnic in Yellowstone. Four out of the past five seasons, the Big Sky has advanced two teams to the FCS quarterfinals. Montana knocked conference mate Weber State out of the tourney in last year's second round on the way to the FCS title game. The regular season was a four-way scramble with Montana State and Eastern Washington battling UM and WSU to the wire. With no coaching changes and lots of returning starters, 2009 looks to play out similarly. The Sky's last two MVPs return at QB: Matt Nichols for Eastern Washington and Cameron Higgins for Weber State. But the best player you may never have heard of could be WSU's diminutive Trevyn Smith. The 5-7 running back has led the league in rushing three consecutive seasons, and in 2008 gained 2,363 all-purpose yards and scored 28 TDs. Defensively, the Big Sky looks to run its streak of consecutive Buck Buchanan Award winners to three, if Montana State's Dane Fletcher can stay healthy at DE.

1. Montana	The Bobby Hauck Era: 57-12, two FCS title games.
2. Weber State	From 1-10 in 2004 to national contenders under Rob McBride.
3. Eastern Washington	A huge offensive arsenal is a nice place to start.
4. Montana State	Looks strong defensively, needs stability at QB.
5. Portland State	Jerry Glanville's NFL teams were known for defense. This team isn't.
6. Northern Colorado	Lost five games by seven points or less; could be a mover.
7. Northern Arizona	Ended 2008 on a four-game tailspin after 6-1 start.
8. Sacramento State	Had best year since 2000, but now comes the hangover.
9. Idaho State	Season three for John Zamberlin will look a lot like the first two.

BIG SOUTH CONFERENCE

Offensive Player of the Year: Tim Maypray, RB, VMI
Defensive Player of the Year: Jeffrey Williams, LB, Gardner-Webb

The Big South begins its eighth year of football and has had a team ranked in the final Top 25 in four of the past five years. When the FCS playoffs expand in 2010, the league will receive an automatic bid to the postseason, but teams will shoot for at-large bids this season. There are no shortage of contenders, with two-time champ Liberty expecting a challenge from Coastal Carolina, looking to return to its playoff form of 2006, and up-and-coming Stony Brook. At Presbyterian, the Blue Hose are still transitioning to full-scholarship football. In 2009, they handed the reins to alumnus Harold Nichols, a former assistant at Bucknell, Rhode Island, and Georgia Southern. Three offensive stars to note: VMI's prolific QB/SB Tim Maypray; Stony Brook RB Edwin Gowins (9.4 yard per carry in '08); and Coastal Carolina QB Zach MacDowall, who passed for 2,064 yards, with 16 TD tosses and only six interceptions.

1. Coastal Carolina	Plenty of bodies back as Chanticleers bid for playoff return.
2. Stony Brook	Strong on offense, but how will the defense fare?
3. Liberty	Big South bully in 2007-08, but grad losses will be tough to overcome.
4. VMI	Climb conference ladder with one of nation's top running games.
5. Gardner-Webb	Steven Patton builds offense around QB Stan Doolittle.
6. Charleston Southern	Games at Florida and South Florida is a tough way to start rebuilding.
7. Presbyterian	Won't sneak up on anyone after beating CCU, Liberty in past two years.

CAA FOOTBALL

Offensive Player of the Year: R.J. Toman, QB, New Hampshire
Defensive Player of the Year: Adrian Tracy, DL, William & Mary

Has CAA Football become the SEC of the FCS? In 2007, the conference sent a record five teams to the playoffs, only to repeat the impressive feat last season. Four of the 2008 playoff teams advanced to the quarterfinals, led by national champ Richmond and semifinalist James Madison. In the polls, three of the nation's top six and four of the top eight hailed from CAA Football. New Hampshire claimed one of two FCS wins over FBS teams, outclassing Army 28-10, while other CAA teams played their FBS foes tough. On the coaching front, Rob Ambrose replaces Gordy Combs at Towson and Joe Trainer takes over for Darren Rizzi at Rhode Island. Towson and Rhode Island are the only CAA Football teams not to make the FCS playoffs since 2001. The other change is at UMass, where OC Kevin Morris took over the top job after Don Brown was named DC at Maryland.

NORTH DIVISION

1. New Hampshire	R.J. Toman leads team looking for sixth consecutive playoff trip.
2. Massachusetts	RB Tony Nelson and WR Victor Cruz help break-in a new QB.
3. Maine	Solid backfield with RB Jared Turcotte, QB Michael Brusko.
4. Hofstra	Lost five of last six, but RB Aaron Weaver and LB Luke Bonus return.
5. Northeastern	Collapsed last season; face grueling gauntlet in 2009.
6. Rhode Island	Joe Casey's return means Rams have a top-flight RB. Will it matter?

SOUTH DIVISION

1. Richmond*	Eric Ward and Kevin Grayson might be nation's best pitch-catch combo.
2. Villanova	Chris Whitney and Antwon Young can't both play QB, but both can play.
3. James Madison	QB battle will be settled in two-a-days: Justin Thorpe vs. Drew Dudzik.
4. William & Mary	RB Jonathan Grimes, DE Adrian Tracy give Tribe stars on each side.
5. Delaware	Another transfer QB — Pat Devlin from Penn State — has Hens clucking.
6. Towson	Team lost last five a year ago; defense is in need of help.

* - Overall conference champion

GREAT WEST FOOTBALL CONFERENCE

Offensive Player of the Year: Tysson Poots, WR, Southern Utah
Defensive Player of the Year: Austin Curtis, DT, Southern Utah

Even with FCS playoff expansion, there's no automatic bid on the near horizon. The Great West is short of the required minimum six teams, and for the short-term, two of its best programs remain in transition from Division II. North Dakota and South Dakota face improved schedules in 2009, illustrated dramatically by the Fighting Sioux' opener at Texas Tech. Rich Ellerson left Cal Poly to become head coach at Army a few months before the prolific Ramses Barden was drafted by the New York Giants. Luckily, the Mustangs landed Tim Walsh to replace Ellerson. Recently, Walsh was at Army, but he made his name guiding Portland State's transition from Division II to the FCS and the Big Sky Conference.

1. Cal Poly	Lost boatload of talent from offense and Ellerson no longer around.
2. Cal-Davis	Back are 11 players who made first of second All-Great West.
3. North Dakota	Some nice pieces in place, but one isn't QB Danny Freund.
4. South Dakota	With 10 starters back, offense scored 51 points in spring game. Defense?
5. Southern Utah	Winning spring game means Cade Cooper is the starting QB.

IVY LEAGUE

Offensive Player of the Year: Jordan Culbreath, RB, Princeton
Defensive Player of the Year: Chris Wynn, CB, Pennsylania

The Ancient Eight remains a bastion of tradition. While a recent tradition is the sight of Harvard perched atop the Ivy League standings, a longstanding tradition that retains its relevance is the season-ending Harvard-Yale clash simply tabbed "The Game." Frequently, it has decided the champ, but Penn and Brown, who tied the Crimson for the title last year, will challenge. Brown coach Phil Estes has led the Bears to three Ivy titles in the past 10 years and will rely on a dynamic WR duo of Buddy Farnham and Bobby Sewell, while Al Bagnoli's Quakers will lean on a strong defense and an improved offense, to try to bring the title back to Penn for the first time since 2003. At Yale, Tom Williams is the first African-American football coach in school history and the second ever in the Ivy League.

1. Harvard	Crimson deep at WR (Matt Luft, Chris Lorditch), RB (Cheng Ho, Gino Gordon).
2. Pennsylvania	Wynn and LB Jake Lewko lead defense, QB Keiffer Garton powers the offense.
3. Brown	Search for QB goes on: no offensive TDs in spring game.
4. Princeton	RB Jordan Culbreath will run behind O-line with four senior starters.
5. Columbia	Lions climb with QB M.A. Olawale, defense led by DL Lou Miller, LB Alex Gross.
6. Yale	Punter Tom Mante sets the table for nation's stingiest defense (10 ppg).
7. Cornell	RB Randy Barbour, versatile WR/return man Bryan Walters are back for Big Red.
8. Dartmouth	Winless 2008 makes it seven wins in four years for Big Green under Buddy Teevens.

MID-EASTERN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE

Offensive Player of the Year: Will Ford, RB, South Carolina State
Defensive Player of the Year: Terrell Whitehead, DB, Norfolk State

South Carolina State ran the MEAC table to earn its first trip ever to the FCS playoffs, only to run into Appalachian State in the opening round. The Bulldogs will be back, pushed by Florida A&M, Bethune-Cookman, Delaware State and Hampton. At North Carolina A&T, former Morgan State defensive coordinator Alonzo Lee steps in. After just one season at Hampton, Jerry Holmes was replaced by Donovan Rose. Meanwhile, Alvin Wyatt last year became Bethune-Cookman's all-time winningest football coach. At FAMU, Joe Taylor's rebuilding program made significant in-roads, as the Rattlers finished 9-3, including Taylor's 200th career collegiate victory.

1. South Carolina State	DE Zachary Middleton recently elected student body President.
2. Florida A&M	QB Curtis Pulley and RS LeRoy Vann among 21 starters back.
3. Bethune-Cookman	QB job up for grabs, but defensive line returns Dexter Jackson, Mike London.
4. Delaware State	Competing at QB: transfers Anthony Glaud (Bowling Green), Chris Johnson (BC).
5. Hampton	QB Herbert Bynes, 18 starters return for the new coaching staff.
6. Winston-Salem State	RB Nic Cooper, QB Jarett Dunston boost offense; defense is a strength.
7. Norfolk State	UConn transfer Dennis Brown at QB, but OL is particularly thin.
8. Morgan State	RB Devan James (1,337 yards) returns, but defensive losses are heavy.
9. North Carolina A&T	LBs Andre Thornton and Brandon Jackson lead stout defense.
10. Howard	If MEAC Rookie of the Year Willie Carter gets any help …

MISSOURI VALLEY FOOTBALL CONFERENCE

Offensive Player of the Year: Kyle Minnett, RB, South Dakota State
Defensive Player of the Year: James Ruffin, DL, Northern Iowa

The league formerly known as the Gateway Football Conference made one coaching change as Brock Spack relieves Denver Johnson at Illinois State after the Redbirds dropped six of their last seven games. Some things never change, though, like the MVFC sending a team to the FBS playoffs for 14 consecutive seasons. At Indiana State, coach Trent Miles may have the program heading in the right direction. The Sycamores enter the season with an active 26-game losing streak that started just one game after ISU had lost 24 straight going back to 2004. That's a mind-boggling 1-50, and opening at Louisville is a tough way to try to turn it around. With NDSU and SDSU playoff-eligible, expect another four-five team race in the Missouri Valley.

1. Northern Iowa	DL Ruffin and LB Josh Mahoney are impact defenders for Panthers.
2. Southern Illinois	LB duo Brandin Jordan and Chauncey Mixon lead the D.
3. South Dakota State	All-conference returnees include RB Kyle Minnett and DL Danny Batten.
4. Western Illinois	FB Dre Gibbs and DB Patrick Stoudamire are back after all-conference seasons.
5. North Dakota State	6-5 Bison won three straight last year before one-point loss in finale at SDSU.
6. Missouri State	Offense operates behind capable leadership of returning QB Cody Kirby.
7. Youngstown State	Look for a big year from DL Crispin Fernandez, open at Pitt.
8. Illinois State	WR Eyad Salem is a nice piece of the puzzle for new coaches.
9. Indiana State	Hope is spring competition breeds fall success; improved line play expected.

NORTHEAST CONFERENCE

Offensive Player of the Year: David McCarty, RB, Albany
Defensive Player of the Year: Scott Lewis, LB, St. Francis

The NEC continues to grow towards automatic playoff bid status, expected next season. Until then, the champ will meet the Pioneer champ in the Gridiron Classic, to be played on the campus of the PFL entrant. NEC football programs offer a maximum of 32 equivalencies, just over half of the 63 permitted in the FCS. The league also benefits from upgrading schedules. In '08 Albany won its second straight NEC title, running the conference table after a brutal "preseason" that included New Hampshire, UMass, Delaware, and a win over Hofstra. The Great Danes again boast the NEC's toughest schedule, leading-off at Georgia Southern, UMass and Maine.

1. Albany	Senior QB Vinny Esposito leads team with no conference losses since 2006.
2. Monmouth	RB David Sinisi has gained over 2,700 yards, scored 39 TDs in past two seasons.
3. Central Conn. State	RB James Mallory accounted for 1,520 yards, 15 TDs last season.
4. Robert Morris	Joe Walton's Colonials finished 2008 by winning three of last four games.
5. Sacred Heart	Paul Gorham led Pioneers to best finish since 2001, turning 3-8 into 8-3.
6. Duquesne	Dominated now-defunct MAAC, finished 3-7 in NEC debut.
7. Wagner	Coach Walt Hameline is closing in on 200 career wins.
8. Saint Francis (PA)	LB Scott Lewis made first-team All-NEC for winless Red Flash.
9. Bryant	RB B.J. Aponte headlines list of seven returning starters on offense.

OHIO VALLEY CONFERENCE

Offensive Player of the Year: Ryan Perrilloux, QB, Jacksonville State
Defensive Player of the Year: Dontrell Miller, DB, Tennessee-Martin

The Ohio Valley Conference remains stable in 2009, as does its coaching ranks. That's good news, considering that UT-Martin's Jason Simpson was a finalist for the UT-Chattanooga job. Keep an eye on Simpson, who has led UTM to 21 wins in three seasons. Not bad for a school that won just eight games total from 1996-2002. The undisputed dean of OVC head men is Eastern Ilinois' Bob Spoo, who starts his 22nd year at the Panthers' helm. Another impressive coaching job was turned in by first-year head coach Dean Hood at Eastern Kentucky, where the Colonels won their 20th OVC title. EKU now has 31 straight winning seasons, second in Division I only to Florida State, and the Colonels are tied with Montana for the most playoff appearances, with 19.

1. Jacksonville State	Jack Crowe's Gamecocks fly as high as talented Perrilloux can take them.
2. Tennessee-Martin	QB Cade Thompson (2,680 yards passing, 24 TD tosses) leads OVC's top offense.
3. Eastern Kentucky	Colonels fill graduation holes, but play at Indiana and Kentucky.
4. Tennessee State	Holes to fill for Tigers, who were 8-2 before dropping last two games.
5. Eastern Illinois	Panthers look to rebound from rare losing season; Penn State is lone FBS foe.
6. Murray State	Matt Griffin rebuilt UTM before coming to Racers, leads steady progression.
7. Tennessee Tech	Freshman of the Year Tim Benford returns with QB Lee Sweeney.
8. Southeast Missouri	K/P Doug Spada is among nation's best.
9. Austin Peay	Explosive KR Terrence Holt set OVC record for kickoff yards in 2008.

PATRIOT LEAGUE

Offensive Player of the Year: Dominic Randolph, QB, Holy Cross
Defensive Player of the Year: Matt Cohen, LB, Lehigh

No other conference can match this Patriot League point of pride: for the fourth consecutive year, the PL begins the season with the same seven head coaches who finished the previous campaign. In 2008, Colgate and Holy Cross met in a matchup of undefeated teams on the final day of the regular season. Colgate won a thriller, 28-27, to claim the PL title and automatic playoff berth, while Holy Cross went home. Meanwhile, Andy Coen tries to right the ship at Lehigh, coming off its worst three-season stretch since the mid 1980s. The Mountain Hawks hope to rebound and turn the battle for the PL title into more than a match-race between Colgate and Holy Cross.

1. Holy Cross	Randolph has eight consecutive 300-yard games; most of starting line returning.
2. Lehigh	QB J.B. Clark and LB Matt Cohen return for LU, which won three of last four.
3. Lafayette	Three-way battle looms at QB spot with Rob Curley as the favorite.
4. Colgate	DB Wayne Moten, RB Nate Eachus (11 TDs), WR Pat Simonds (65 catches) return.
5. Fordham	QB John Skelton (2,605 yards/15 TDs), RB Xavier Martin (1,237 yards) are back.
6. Bucknell	RS A.J. Kizekai returns for Tim Landis' Bison, coming off two losing seasons.
7. Georgetown	Kevin Kelly's Hoyas averaged less than 10 ppg; 3-18 past two years.

PIONEER FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Offensive Player of the Year: Rudell Small, RB, Jacksonville
Defensive Player of the Year: Wes McDermott, LB, Morehead State

The only true non-scholarship conference in the FCS, the Pioneer Football League adds Marist, a refugee from the defunct Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference. The league will employ the Big Ten scheduling format with each team playing eight of the other nine teams. At the end of the season, the champion will host the NEC winners in the annual Gridiron Classic.

1. Jacksonville	QB Josh McGregor, RB Rudell Small return for defending champion.
2. San Diego	RB JT Rogan granted 6th year of eligibility, rejoins QB Sebastian Trujillo.
3. Morehead State	Broke even a year ago, but should be better with DL Derick Steiner, LB Wes McDermott.
4. Butler	Bulldogs bring back RB Dionte Wiggins, QB Matt Kobli, DE Grant Hunter.
5. Dayton	Flyers soared until losing last two to Morehead State, Jacksonville.
6. Davidson	Tough opener at SoCon's Elon for Tripp Merritt's Wildcats.
7. Drake	FB Steve Platek (seven TDs, 547 all-purpose yards) leads Bulldogs.
8. Valparaiso	With six home games, Stacy Adams' Crusaders seek first winning season since 2003.
9. Campbell	Freshman LB Milton Brown scored two TDs to go with 83 tackles, 3 int's, 2 sacks.
10. Marist	Jim Parady's Red Foxes ease into PFL after three straight losing seasons.

SOUTHERN CONFERENCE

Offensive Player of the Year: Armanti Edwards, QB, Appalachian State
Defensive Player of the Year: Mark LeGree, DB, Appalachian State

The Southern Conference is quarterback-rich in 2009, as eight of nine teams return starting quarterbacks, with Wofford being the lone program looking for a new signal-caller. Appalachian State's Armanti Edwards aims to become the first-ever two-time Walter Payton Award winner in 2009 after running away with the trophy last year. At Chattanooga, the Mocs bring in Russ Huesman to take over for Rodney Allison after a disappointing 1-11 season. Huesman, who was defensive coordinator for Richmond, got bad news in the spring when the NCAA announced that UTC would be ineligible for the playoffs due to APR struggles.

1. Appalachian State	Defense tough again with LB Jacque Roman, DB Mark LeGree.
2. Elon	Terrell Hudgins will take most SoCon receiving records with him.
3. Georgia Southern	Eagles dropped three games — AppState, Elon, Wofford — by a total of four points.
4. Wofford	Mike Ayers will find a new QB as Terriers seek eighth straight winning season.
5. The Citadel	Bulldogs lost seven of eight after 3-1 start; need more "D" to win again.
6. Furman	Furman brings back QB Jordan Sorrells, but plays at Missouri and Auburn.
7. Samford	Junior RB Chris Evans has two 1,000-yard seasons, 11 100-yard games.
8. Western Carolina	Dennis Wagner looks to build upon his 3-9 debut behind QB Zack Jaynes.
9. Chattanooga	QB Jare Gault returns for Mocs who open with Glenville State, close at 'Bama.

SOUTHLAND CONFERENCE

Offensive Player of the Year: Todd Pendland, RB, McNeese State
Defensive Player of the Year: Tim Knicky, DL, Stephen F. Austin

The Southland remains one of FCS' most dynamic circuits. Although the membership was stable, Central Arkansas continues transitioning from Division II and remains ineligible for the playoffs and the SLC title. However, last year UCA was the unofficial SLC champion after going 6-1 and losing only to Nicholls State. Coming soon, SLC expansion, as Lamar resumes football in 2010 and UT-San Antonio launches football in 2011. Texas State looks to return to the playoffs following a first-round elimination at Montana last season. In the coaching rolls, the only SLC change came at Northwestern State, where Scott Stoker is out after seven seasons, and Bradley Dale Peveto is in. It wasn't that the Demons were losing — Stoker's teams went 43-38 — they just didn't win as much as NSU supporters have come to expect.

1. Texas State	TD tandem QB Bradley George had 26 and RB Karrington Bush had 13.
2. McNeese State	QB Derrick Fourroux produced 29 TDs on 2,646 all-purpose yards.
3. Central Arkansas	Clint Conque is now 68-32 in nine years; All-American OL Lane Freiwald returns.
4. Sam Houston State	Bearkats were 1-2 in OT, losing season's last two to SLU, TSU.
5. Stephen F. Austin	QB Jeremy Moses threw for 4,026 yards, 41 TDs, but 'Jacks need more defense.
6. Northwestern State	Demons have missed playoffs four straight years, first time since 1993-96.
7. Nicholls State	Jay Thomas' Colonels again face two FBS foes: Air Force and Louisiana Tech.
8. SE Louisiana	Golden Lions' best player is DB Tommy Connors (108 tackles, four interceptions).

SOUTHWESTERN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE

Offensive Player of the Year: Bryant Lee, QB, Southern
Defensive Player of the Year: Kevin Thornton, DB, Arkansas-Pine Bluff

The SWAC story has been "Tiger Tales," with the East Division Jackson State Tigers and the West Division Grambling State Tigers winning their way into the SWAC championship games in the last two seasons. In 2007, GSU lost the title game to JSU after beating them during the regular season. Last year, after Grambling again won the regular-season match-up, the G-men easily handled JSU. On the way to a Black College national championship, the 11-2 Grambling Tigers won their last 10 games, starting 14-5 over Jackson State and wrapping-up in the SWAC Championship. In the coaching ranks, it was a relatively unremarkable offseason, with the only change coming at Alcorn State.

EAST DIVISION

1. Jackson State	JSU started 1-4, then rallied to win six straight.
2. Alabama A&M	Thomas Harris (71 catches, 1,116 yards, 10 TDs) poised for big year.
3. Alabama State	Hornets have light schedule with seven home games, three lower-division opponents.
4. Mississippi Valley	Delta Devils open at Arkansas State, then have bye and three straight home games.
5. Alcorn State	Braves scored just 15 ppg in last five games, which is why coaches get fired.

WEST DIVISION

1. Grambling State*	Losses were at Nevada, Northwestern St.; DT Christian Anthony anchors "D."
2. Southern	QB Bryant Lee produced 26 TDs and 3,216 yards total offense, just seven picks.
3. Prairie View A&M	Offense carried by RB Donald Babers, 1,000-yard rusher who scored 12 times.
4. Arkansas-Pine Bluff	Thornton a nice piece for team that nearly upset Southern in double overtime.
5. Texas Southern	Defense that yielded 472 points faces tough slate with games at Rutgers, UL-Monroe.

* - Overall conference champion

FCS INDEPENDENTS

Offensive Player of the Year: Will Scott, WR, North Carolina Central
Defensive Player of the Year: Teryl White, DL, North Carolina Central

The ranks of the FCS Independents shrinks to three this year. Iona dropped football, and Bryant (NEC) and Marist (Pioneer) joined conferences. Old Dominion resumes its football program after a long absence, with the Monarchs starting as an Independent this season on their way to eventual full CAA Football membership. Round-robin play is scheduled between the three FCS Independents.

1. NC Central	Bulldogs return 18 starters for third-year coach Mose Rison; face Duke in September.
2. Savannah State	Robby Wells led the Tigers to a 5-7 record, SSU's best Div. I finish yet.
3. Old Dominion	Bobby Wilder has been preparing over two years for Monarchs' opener vs. Chowan.

Bearcats Keep Clawing for Elusive National Title

The Buffalo Bills comparisons are inevitable. After reaching — and losing — four consecutive title games, Division II powerhouse Northwest Missouri State entered spring practice with a certain level of frustration.

But coach Mel Tjeerdsma is focusing on the positives. And there are a slew of them.

Eight games televised on ESPN in the past four years have brought unprecedented exposure to the program, excited the fan base and certainly helped recruiting.

"There's no way to put a value on that," Tjeerdsma said of the television exposure. "There's definitely frustration with (losing four straight title games) for all of us — for the guys coming back and for us as coaches. But the positives far outweigh it.

"The only negative of a playoff system that I see is that 24 get in, and 23 end up with a loss. So if you get to the playoffs, you're probably leaving frustrated a little bit."

There's every reason to believe the Bearcats will make another run at that elusive championship. They return nine starters on a defense that allowed just 301 yards per game in 2008, led by two *Lindy's* preseason first-team All-Americans, safety Myles Burnsides and defensive end Sean Paddock.

The offense will be young with just four returning starters, but senior running back LaRon Council gives Tjeerdsma three first-team All-Americans.

"You look to all three as being leaders, and they really are, on and off the field," said Tjeerdsma. "There are not many times in my coaching career I can remember having three first-team All-Americans coming back."

He'll be counting on that leadership when the Bearcats make a long road trip to open the season at Abilene Christian on a Thursday night game televised by CBS. The two powers faced twice last season. Abilene took a 44-27 victory back to Texas to open the season, but NWMSU got the last laugh by ending the Wildcats' season with a 45-36 shootout win in Abilene.

"It's a little bit of a risk when you play a team that good," said Tjeerdsma. "But we used to play Nebraska-Omaha, and that game never kept us from getting into the playoffs even if we lost it. It's good for your kids — to put them up there on a big stage right way and find out where you're at."

As always, how the competition stacks up is difficult to tell with so much roster turnover at the D-II level. But Abilene Christian figures to be there, along with a host of others.

Perennial power Grand Valley State returns 15 of 22 starters, led by Harlon Hill finalist quarterback Brad Iciek, who is 23-2 at the Lakers' starter. GVSU is 61-5 with two national titles in five years under coach Chuck Martin, whose name is increasingly tied to openings at bigger programs following each season.

Delta State also has a senior signal-caller in Garrett DeWitt, while Bloomsburg welcomes back 37-game starter Dan Latorre.

Minnesota-Duluth is coming off its first national title, and has youngsters Jon Lynch and Ryan Bourassa battling to replace record-setting quarterback Ted Schlafke. Coach Bob Nielson does return 11 starters, and has time to mold his team. The Bulldogs, who play out of the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference, won their 11 regular-season games in 2008 by an average of 34.5 points.

Division II welcomes Terry Bowden, who accepted the reins at North Alabama. He spent the spring looking for playmakers at all skill positions. Bowden brought in NC State transfer Harrison Beck, who also spent a season at Nebraska, to compete at quarterback with Genario McNealy.

—Derek Harper

Division II Top 25

1. NW Missouri State	No pity for coach Mel Tjeerdsma; plenty of weaponry returning for another title run.
2. Grand Valley State	Senior QB Brad Iciek is 23-2 as a starter; Lakers return 15 of 22 starters.
3. Minnesota-Duluth	Jon Lynch, Ryan Bourassa compete to replace career passing leader Ted Schlafke.
4. Delta State	QB Garrett DeWitt completed 62 percent for Fighting Okra last season.
5. California (Pa.)	Vulcans deep at many spots, look to build on consecutive national semi appearances.
6. Pittsburg State	Junior QB John McCoy favored over Zac Dickey to replace departed Mark Smith.
7. Bloomsburg	Coach Danny Hale returns nine All-PSAC players, including 37-game starting QB Dan Latorre.
8. Abilene Christian	If QB Zach Stewart doesn't recover from shoulder surgery, it's untested Clark Harrell or Mitchell Gale.
9. Carson-Newman	Nine returning All-SAC performers, including RB Buck Wakefield leading D-II's top ground game.
10. Valdosta State	QB Ronnye Nelson in spotlight; no Chris Hart (sitting out), Tucker Pruitt (graduated), Russ Calloway (ACL).
11. Chadron State	Three senior receivers will help soften the transition to junior QB Garrett Treffer.
12. West Texas A&M	QB Taylor Harris tries to replace sixth-round pick Keith Null (48 TDs and 5,097 passing yards).
13. Ashland	New O-coordinator Mike Bath has All-GLIAC QB Billy Cundiff; needs RB Dawon Harvey back healthy.
14. North Alabama	New coach Terry Bowden has to hope well-traveled QB Harrison Beck wins starting job.
15. Catawba	North Carolina transfer QB Cam Sexton steps into pro-style offense with veteran OL.
16. Tuskegee	High-powered Golden Eagles one blown call away from riding 27-game winning streak into '09.
17. West Chester	Senior QB Joe Wright needs new go-to threat with record-setting WR Mike Washington departed.
18. Nebraska-Kearney	Lopers return entire O-line blocking in front of impressive sophomore QB Jake Spitzlberger.
19. Indiana (Pa.)	Former QB J.J. Townsend set to make immediate impact for thin receiving corps.
20. Tusculum	QB Corey Russell graduated; Brandon Behemma left program; four QBs have combined zero snaps.
21. Edinboro	QB Trevor Harris owns every school passing mark, but lost top four WRs and has youth all around him.
22. Wayne State (Neb.)	Coach Paul Winters returns eight starters on offense, but only three on defense.
23. Seton Hill	Program four years old, plays home games on a high school field and already has reached playoffs.
24. Mars Hill	Clemson transfer QB Jon Richt, son of Georgia coach Mark, should win crowded battle.
25. Central Washington	QB Mike Reilly gone and only four GNAC teams left; CWU says it's committed to program.

Lindy's 2009 All-Div-II Team

OFFENSE - First Team

QB	Brad Iciek	Sr.	Grand Valley State
RB	LaRon Council	Sr.	NW Missouri State
RB	Isaac Odim	Jr.	Minnesota-Duluth
WR	Logan Masters	Sr.	Wayne State
WR	D.J. Winfield	Jr.	Minnesota-Duluth
TE	Jarrell NeSmith	Sr.	Tusculum
OL	Tony Washington	Sr.	Abilene Christian
OL	Terence Crosby	Sr.	Catawba
OL	Bill Behling	Sr.	Michigan Tech
OL	Jack Hiett	Sr.	Nebraska-Kearney
OL	J'Marcus Webb	Sr.	West Texas A&M
AP	Josh Murray	Jr.	North Dakota
K	Nick Hope	Sr.	Wayne State

DEFENSE - First Team

DL	Sean Paddock	Sr.	NW Missouri State
DL	Danny Richard	Jr.	Grand Valley State
DL	Drew Berube	Sr.	Hillsdale
DL	Marc Schiechl	Jr.	Colorado Mines
LB	John Jacobs	Sr.	Saginaw Valley State
LB	Lardester Hicks-Green	Sr.	Delta State
LB	Mike Johnson	Sr.	North Alabama
DB	Terrence Johnson	Sr.	California (Pa.)
DB	Akwasi Owusu-Ansah	Sr.	Indiana (Pa.)
DB	Myles Burnsides	Sr.	NW Missouri State
DB	Jesse Cooper	Jr.	Bloomsburg
P	John Gregory	Sr.	Tusculum

OFFENSE - Second Team

QB	Billy Cundiff	Sr.	Ashland
RB	James Berezik	Jr.	Grand Valley State
RB	Joique Bell	Sr.	Wayne State
WR	Joe Horn	Jr.	Ashland
WR	Kyle Kaiser	Jr.	Nebraska-Kearney
TE	DeMarco Cosby	Jr.	Central Missouri
OL	Jimmy O'Rourke	Sr.	IUP
OL	Jared Veldheer	Sr.	Hillsdale
OL	Jay Nunez	Sr.	Pittsburg State
OL	Michael Stevens	Sr.	Tuskegee
OL	Bill Boyer	Jr.	Washburn
AP	Trevar Deed	So.	Delta State
K	Jeremy Ditzler	Jr.	Gannon

DEFENSE - Second Team

DL	Melquan Fair	Sr.	Catawba
DL	Xavier Brown	Jr.	C.W. Post
DL	Rashad Pittman	Sr.	Pittsburg State
DL	Tony Johnson	So.	Merrimack
LB	Matt Shango	Sr.	West Bloomfield
LB	Justin Victor	Jr.	Grand Valley State
LB	Jared Brawner	Sr.	Missouri State
DB	Allen Bush	Sr.	American International
DB	Jeff Gowdy	Sr.	Fayetteville St.
DB	Anthony Fields	Sr.	Findlay
DB	Deante Steele	Jr.	Shepherd
P	Will Baston	Sr.	North Alabama

THE BIG ONES

AUGUST 27
NW Missouri State at Abilene Christian
Thursday night opener; split bookend meetings last year, with Bearcats winning playoff rematch.

AUGUST 29
Grand Valley State at West Texas A&M
Traditional powers open season with first of home-and-home series.

SEPTEMBER 5
Bloomsburg at California (Pa.)
Big early nonconference tilt will shake out the rankings a bit.

SEPTEMBER 12
Pittsburg State at NW Missouri State
Bearcats took both '08 meetings, but "Fall Classic" always an Arrowhead battle.

OCTOBER 1
Valdosta State at Delta State
Statesmen won in double OT last year; Gulf South could be on the line.

2008 PLAYOFFS

FIRST ROUND
Tusculum 34, Albany State 22
Valdosta State 24, Carson-Newman 20
West Texas A&M 49, Central Washington 42
Pittsburg State 33, Nebraska-Omaha 21
West Chester 52, Southern Connecticut St. 32
Seton Hill 15, American International 7
Ashland 27, Minnesota State Mankato 16
Chadron State 23, Wayne State 17

SECOND ROUND
Delta State 27, Tusculum 19
North Alabama 37, Valdosta State 10
Abilene Christian 93, West Texas A&M 68
Northwest Missouri State 38, Pittsburg State 35
Bloomsburg 28, West Chester 21
California (Pa.) 48, Seton Hill 7
Grand Valley State 40, Ashland 7
Minnesota-Duluth 20, Chadron State 10

QUARTERFINALS
North Alabama 55, Delta State 34
Northwest Missouri State 45, Abilene Christian 36
California (Pa.) 27, Bloomsburg 24
Minnesota-Duluth 19, Grand Valley State 13 (2OT)

SEMIFINALS
Northwest Missouri State 41, North Alabama 7
Minnesota-Duluth 45, California (Pa.) 7

CHAMPIONSHIP
Minnesota-Duluth 21, Northwest Missouri State 14

Photo by Marvin Gentry-US PRESSWIRE

Most Valuable Player	Offensive Player of the Year	Defensive Player of the Year	Newcomer of the Year
Brad Iciek QB, Grand Valley St.	LaRon Council RB, NW Missouri St.	Myles Burnsides DB, NW Missouri St.	Cam Sexton QB, Catawba

Division III Finds Strongholds Deep in Heart of Texas

Before he took the field at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor for the first practice in 1998, coach Pete Fredenburg had to do more than convince his recruits they could be winners at a start-up program.

The former Division I assistant at Baylor had to sell high-school-football-crazy Texans on the idea that the Division III version of the game was more than just NCAA-sanctioned intramurals.

"When we got here, high school coaches didn't know how to embrace D-III. It was in its infancy in Texas," said Fredenburg, 62. "You had the very strong programs in the Northeast."

Then, the South and West were uncharted areas for D-III football. Now, Texas — with other playoff-tested squads Hardin-Simmons and Trinity, which each have three playoff appearances since 2004 — can be counted on as a player nationally.

The Cru — the 2004 national runner-up and the only school to beat Mount Union in the postseason in the past five years — is one win away from the 100-win milestone.

"I would have rather we passed that mark last season," Fredenburg said. "But it is something to be very proud of."

The Cru has averaged nine wins per season since 200 players showed up for the first preseason camp in 1998. Running backs coach and junior varsity head coach Jeff Shinn was one of them. He scored Mary Hardin-Baylor's first touchdown.

"We have really tried to create a family atmosphere," Fredenburg said.

Not bad for a program that was housed in a trailer in its first year.

Mary Hardin-Baylor is looking for its eighth playoff berth after reaching the semifinals a year ago, where the Cru lost to Whitewater 39-13.

The Cru will need to find some important replacements.

The offense will have a new look up front with the departure of three starting offensive lineman. Center Dustin Davis and tackle Max Taylor will be counted on to anchor the front, along with tackle/guard Myke Gobert.

Tailback Quincy Daniels is also back after suffering a season-ending knee injury on the first offensive play of the second game. He posted a 100-yard rushing day in the season opener. Daniels will have backfield help from Bryson Tucker, who ran for 672 yards and four touchdowns after making the move from defense with two games remaining in the regular season.

The Cru will have to replace several key defensive starters, including ASC Defensive Player of the Year MLB Eric Henri, All-American free safety Derrick Williams and defensive tackles Mark Balderas and James Jenkins.

Linebackers Ben Beckworth and Jeremy Salinas are the top returning playmakers. Beckworth posted 86 tackles and 13 tackles for loss last season and Salinas added 64 stops. Defensive tackle David Danforth can also clog up the middle and is the most experienced returner at that position.

Defensive ends Marco Coppola and Brenson Bristow will have to step up with the loss of Mark Manning and Adam Aguilera. Cornerback Brett Parker led the team with 10 pass break-ups last season and ranks among the Cru's all-time leaders in interceptions.

"We always have high expectations," Fredenburg said. "We have some younger guys who are going to have to step up."

One of the guys Fredenburg is counting on is quarterback Kyle Noack, who threw for 618 yards and six TDs while running for 107 yards and another score in his sophomore season.

"He won a state championship in high school, and knows what is expected of him," Fredenburg said.

Standing in the Cru's way will be, among others, Mount Union and Wisconsin-Whitewater. As usual.

– Dominick DiRienzo

Division III Top 25

1. Mount Union	Likely to keep rolling despite loss of all-division career rushing leader Nate Kmic.
2. Wisc.-Whitewater	Stagg Bowl could be UW-Whitewater vs. Mount Union V.
3. North Central	QB Aaron Fanthorpe and RB Dominic Sulo flourish in spread offense.
4. Delaware Valley	LB Kyle Gesswein led MAC with 10.5 sacks and 21 tackles for loss.
5. Monmouth	Josh Kotecki and Dan Schwindenhammer open holes for offense that scored 75 TDs.
6. St. John's	Johnnies expected to challenge for 14th MIAC title in the past 18 seasons.
7. Mary Hardin-Baylor	Cru counting on healthy Quincy Daniels at tailback.
8. St. Thomas (Minn.)	Tommies expect 10 All-MIAC players back from 7-3 team.
9. Willamette	Tailback Deon Horne averaged 7.0 yards per carry in 2008.
10. Ithaca	Matt Scalice should be among nation's top linebackers.
11. Otterbein	OAC co-Coach of the Year Joe Loth looks to build on Cardinals' first playoff berth.
12. Rowan	Quarterback Frank Wilczynski one of 10 starters back on offense.
13. Central	The Dutch's 280-61-1 (.820) record since 1975 is the second-best of any NCAA team.
14. Wartburg	Record-setting quarterback Nick Yordi back to lead Knights.
15. Hardin-Simmons	O-lineman Kurston Williams (6-0, 320) healthy, adds beef to line.
16. Occidental	Wide receiver Jordan Washington was SCIAC's top rookie last year.
17. Wash. & Jefferson	Record-setting QB Bobby Swallow gone; DB Craig Sedunov and defense step up.
18. N. Carolina Wesleyan	Running back Steadman Mathis sparks the Bishops' offense.
19. Wabash	NCAC offensive MVP Matt Hudson looks to lead Little Giants.
20. Aurora	Junior running back Ryne Reder leads the returners on offense.
21. Franklin	The offense's four returning starters are on line.
22. Rensselaer	Gone are four-year starter at QB and three D-linemen; but 16 starters are back.
23. Redlands	Eight starters return from defense that led nation against run and in tackles for loss.
24. Johns Hopkins	Running back Andrew Kase gives Blue Jays big threat.
25. Trine	First three years of Thunder football: 2-28; first three years under coach Matt Land: 18-13.

Lindy's 2009 All-Div-III Team

OFFENSE - First Team

QB	Alex Tanney	Jr.	Monmouth
RB	Tunde Ogun	Sr.	Chris. Newport
RB	DeRon Brown	Sr.	MIT
WR	Cecil Shorts	Sr.	Mount Union
WR	Michael Jennings	Sr.	Illinois College
TE	Kenny Russell	Jr.	Fitchburg St.
C	Josh Ostrue	Sr.	St. Thomas (Minn.)
OL	Blaine Westemeyer	Sr.	Augustana (Ill.)
OL	Josh Kotecki	Sr.	Monmouth
OL	John Shivers	Sr.	Millsaps
OL	Dan Schwindenhammer	Sr.	Monmouth
AP	Jose Green	Jr.	Willamette
K	Alan Munoz	Jr.	Mary Hardin-Baylor

DEFENSE - First Team

DE	James Herbert	Sr.	Mount Union
DT	Gerard Bryant	Sr.	St. Lawrence
DT	Giustin Jenkins	Sr.	Pacific Lutheran
DE	Marcus Ball	Jr.	UW-Stout
LB	Matt Wenger	Jr.	North Central
LB	Randy Wright	Jr.	Elmhurst
LB	Kyle Gesswein	Jr.	Delaware Valley
CB	Victor Edwards	Sr.	Cal Lutheran
CB	Troney Shumpert	Sr.	UW-Whitewater
S	Drew McClain	Sr.	Mount Union
S	Joe Welch	Sr.	Gustavus Adolphus
P	T.J. Grzesikowski	Jr.	Ferrum

OFFENSE - Second Team

QB	Justin Feaster	Sr.	Hardin-Simmons
RB	Adam Anderson	Sr.	Whitworth
RB	Levell Coppage	So.	UW-Whitewater
WR	Pat O'Connor	Sr.	Dickinson
WR	Kody Lemond	Jr.	Wabash
TE	Reed Eason	Jr.	Rose-Hulman
C	Chad Schenkel	Jr.	Franklin
OL	Brad Eckelmann	Jr.	Carleton
OL	Kyle Antos	Jr.	North Central
OL	Storm Tropea	Sr.	Wooster
OL	Mike Stoffel	Sr.	Johns Hopkins
AP	Caleb Jennings	Jr.	Emory and Henry
K	Jackson Damron	So.	Cal Lutheran

DEFENSE - Second Team

DE	Anthony White	Jr.	UW-Whitewater
DT	Matt Williamson	Sr.	Mount Union
DT	Joe Goetz	Sr.	Ithaca
DE	Jim Sestito	Sr.	Plymouth State
LB	Brad Steinmetz	Sr.	Thomas More
LB	John Lawrence	Sr.	Hamilton
LB	Ryan Wimmer	Sr.	St. John's
CB	Chalankis Brown	Jr.	Sewanee
CB	Bobby Bott	Sr.	Case Western
S	Michael Tracy	Sr.	Hardin-Simmons
S	Tom Tassinari	Sr.	Tufts
P	Bobby Eppleman	Jr.	Susquehanna

THE BIG ONES

SEPTEMBER 12
Wisconsin-Eau Claire at St. John's
Legendary St. John's coach John Gagliardi takes field for 61st season.

OCTOBER 3
Mary Hardin-Baylor at Hardin-Simmons
Texas battle of playoff-caliber teams in ASC.

OCTOBER 10
Redlands at Occidental
Battle of SCIAC powerhouses.

NOVEMBER 7
Central at Wartburg
Regular-season finale likely the Iowa Conference championship.

NOVEMBER 14
Cortland at Ithaca
The battle for the Cortaca Jug is one of Division III's signature rivalry games.

2008 PLAYOFFS

FIRST ROUND

Mount Union 56, Randolph-Macon 0
Hobart 33, Lycoming 15
Cortland State 31, Plymouth State 14
Curry 26, Ithaca 21
North Central (Ill.) 44, Thomas More 23
Franklin 62, Otterbein 45
Wabash 20, Case Reserve 17
Wheaton (Ill.) 14, Trine 0
Willamette 48, Occidental 33
Wisc.-Whitewater 37, St. John's (Minn.) 7
Wartburg 26, Wisc.-Stevens Point 21
Monmouth (Ill.) 42, Aurora 13
Millsaps 51, LaGrange 26
Wash. & Jefferson 35, Chris.Newport 29
Wesley 20, Muhlenberg 0
Mary Hardin-Baylor 38, Hardin-Simmons 35

SECOND ROUND

Mount Union 42, Hobart 7
Cortland State 42, Curry 0
Franklin 38, North Central (Ill.) 28
Wheaton (Ill.) 59, Wabash 28
Wisc.-Whitewater 30, Willamette 27
Wartburg 30, Monmouth (Ill) 28
Washington & Jefferson 35, Millsaps 20
Mary Hardin-Baylor 46, Wesley 14

QUARTERFINALS

Mount Union 41, Cortland State 14
Wheaton (Ill.) 45, Franklin 28
Wisc.-Whitewater 34, Wartburg 17
Mary Hardin-Baylor 63, Washington & Jefferson 7

SEMIFINALS

Mount Union 45, Wheaton (Ill.) 24
Wisc.-Whitewater 39, Mary Hardin-Baylor 13

CHAMPIONSHIP

Mount Union 31, Wisc.-Whitewater 26

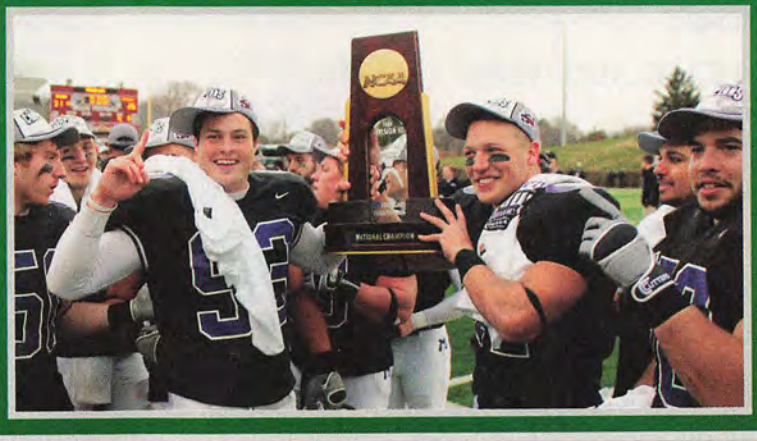


Photo by Scott Terra/Cal Sport Media

Most Valuable Player	Offensive Player of the Year	Defensive Player of the Year	Newcomer of the Year
Tunde Ogun, RB Chris. Newport	Alex Tanney, QB Monmouth	Matt Wenger, LB North Central	Tan Stokes, RB E. Texas Baptist Univ.

A LOOK BACK

5 YEARS AGO (2004)

Matt Leinart

Photo by Jeff Zelevansky

USC and Oklahoma started the season ranked No. 1 and No. 2, and they rode undefeated seasons all the way to the BCS championship game in the Orange Bowl. It was billed as one of the greatest showdowns in college football history, with four of the top five Heisman Trophy vote-getters (including 2004 winner Matt Leinart and 2003 winner Jason White) ... but it quickly turned into a mismatch as the Trojans swamped the Sooners, 55-19. Auburn, meanwhile, became a poster boy for BCS-bashers, after the Tigers completed a 13-0 season but never got a sniff at the national championship.

FINAL AP TOP 5
1. USC
2. Auburn
3. Oklahoma
4. Utah
5. Texas

HEISMAN TROPHY
1. Matt Leinart, QB, USC
2. Adrian Peterson, RB, Oklahoma
3. Jason White, QB, Oklahoma
4. Alex Smith, QB, Utah

10 YEARS AGO (1999)

Bobby Bowden's Florida State program was in its heyday, amid a remarkable stretch in which the Seminoles won two national championships in a seven-year span, finished in the top five 14 consecutive years, and captured the first nine ACC championships for which they competed. This season ended the century perfectly for FSU, as the 'Noles went wire to wire as the No. 1 team — the first team to do that in 27 years. Chris Weinke, Peter Warrick and the crew outlasted Virginia Tech and its stunning freshman quarterback Michael Vick in a wild championship game, 46-29.

FINAL AP TOP 5
1. Florida State
2. Virginia Tech
3. Nebraska
4. Wisconsin
5. Michigan

HEISMAN TROPHY
1. Ron Dayne, RB, Wisconsin
2. Joe Hamilton, QB, Georgia Tech
3. Michael Vick, QB, Virginia Tech
4. Drew Brees, QB, Purdue

15 YEARS AGO (1994)

Rashaan Salaam

Photo by Tim DeFrisco

A year after falling in a national championship Orange Bowl (when they missed a field goal against Florida State on the last play), the Nebraska Cornhuskers had something to prove in 1994, and they proved every bit of it. This team overcame injuries to two quarterbacks (a blood clot in his knee cost Tommie Frazier two-thirds of the season, and a collapsed lung cost Brook Berringer two games) and simply would not be denied, launching a remarkable 26-game winning streak. It was the first of three titles for coach Tom Osborne. Penn State, meanwhile, won its first Big Ten title, but couldn't get a share of the national title despite a 12-0 record.

FINAL AP TOP 5
1. Nebraska
2. Penn State
3. Colorado
4. Florida State
5. Alabama

HEISMAN TROPHY
1. Rashaan Salaam, RB, Colorado
2. Ki-Jana Carter, RB, Penn State
3. Steve McNair, QB, Alcorn State
4. Kerry Collins, QB, Penn State

20 YEARS AGO (1989)

Miami (11-1) captured its third championship in a nine-year period when the No. 2 Hurricanes got past No. 7 Alabama in the Sugar Bowl, 33-25, while No. 4 Notre Dame defeated top-ranked Colorado. The Buffaloes would bounce back to win the national championship the following season, but by most accounts this was the better Buffalo team. This CU edition — dedicating the season to quarterback Sal Aunese, who died of cancer early in the season — was the only team in the country to complete an undefeated regular season ... but it lost to Notre Dame in the Orange Bowl, 21-6.

FINAL AP TOP 5
1. Miami
2. Notre Dame
3. Florida State
4. Colorado
5. Tennessee

HEISMAN TROPHY
1. Andre Ware, QB, Houston
2. Anthony Thompson, RB, Indiana
3. Major Harris, QB, West Virginia
4. Tony Rice, QB, Notre Dame

25 YEARS AGO (1984)

Doug Flutie

Photo by Tony Tomsic/NFL

This was the year that BYU proved itself as the ultimate BCS buster, even before there was a BCS. LaVell Edwards' Cougars were the only undefeated team, gradually rising to the top of the polls as everybody else lost. Productive passer Robbie Bosco led the way, and by the time they won the MWC championship and went to the Holiday Bowl, there were no quality teams available to face. So, there in San Diego was 12-0 BYU and 6-5 Michigan ... and it took a heroic effort from Bosco to lift the Cougars to victory. Voters had appeared all set to vault No. 2 Oklahoma to the top spot, but Washington upended the Sooners (in the famed Boomer Schooner game when OU was penalized and had points taken off the board when the pony-driven Schooner raced onto the field prematurely). That left No. 1 BYU the only team worthy of votes, particularly since No. 3 Florida was on probation and stayed home at bowl season.

FINAL AP TOP 5
1. Brigham Young
2. Washington
3. Florida
4. Nebraska
5. Boston College

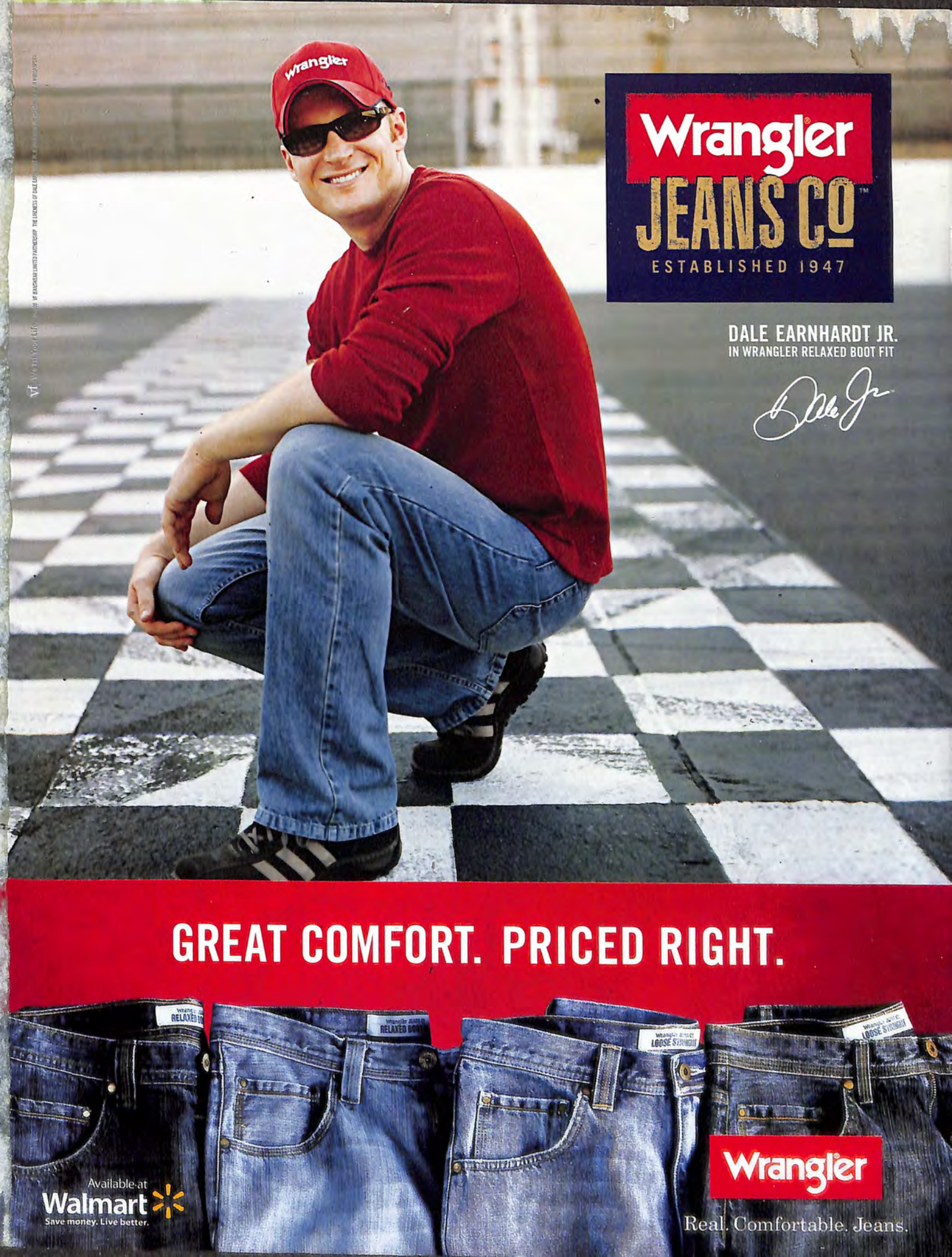
HEISMAN TROPHY
1. Doug Flutie, QB, Boston College
2. Keith Byars, RB, Ohio State
3. Robbie Bosco, QB, BYU
4. Bernie Kosar, QB, Miami

50 YEARS AGO (1959)

Led by sophomore RB Ernie Davis, Syracuse rose to the top of the polls as the only undefeated team in the country, and handled No. 4 Texas in the Cotton Bowl, 23-14. Davis, of course, would go on to become the first African-American player to win the Heisman Trophy two years later ... but soon after was stricken with leukemia and died. LSU back Billy Cannon won the Heisman in '59 after beating Ole Miss with his stunning 89-yard punt return. Cannon and the Tigers eventually earned a trip to the Sugar Bowl, only to have Ole Miss waiting for them. The Rebels applied a 21-0 thrashing on the second go-round.

FINAL AP TOP 5
1. Syracuse
2. Mississippi
3. LSU
4. Texas
5. Georgia

HEISMAN TROPHY
1. Billy Cannon, HB, LSU
2. Richie Lucas, QB, Penn State
3. Don Meredith, QB, SMU
4. Bill Burrell, G/LB, Illinois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